



Little Stories of Quebec

James Edward Le Rossignol



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MADAME LEPIŇE.

LITTLE STORIES OF QUEBEC

By
JAMES EDWARD LE ROSSIGNOL

DECORATIONS AND ILLUSTRATIONS
BY LAURA MILIER



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TO MY FRIEND,
JOHN LEWIS DAY.

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I.
THE POOR OF THIS WORLD.

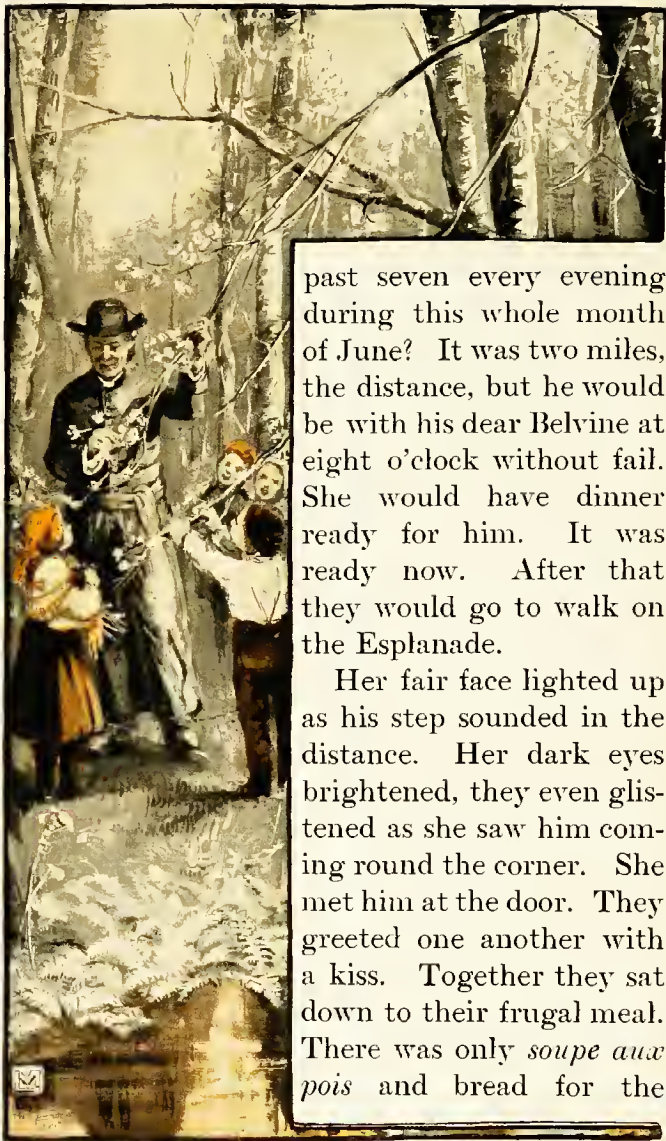




THE POOR OF THIS WORLD.

1.

MADAME LEPINE sat alone at the window of No. 62 Rue du Bon Secours in the suburb of St. Sauveur de Quebec, knitting industriously, but at the same time gazing intently down the street. It was near the hour of eight in the evening, but the long northern twilight had not yet begun to darken the little room. At eight o'clock precisely Philippe would come. For had they not been married the week before, and was not Philippe since three days foreman in the great shipyard of Thibeaudeau Frères, and was it not his privilege to leave the yard at half-



past seven every evening during this whole month of June? It was two miles, the distance, but he would be with his dear Belvine at eight o'clock without fail. She would have dinner ready for him. It was ready now. After that they would go to walk on the Esplanade.

Her fair face lighted up as his step sounded in the distance. Her dark eyes brightened, they even glistened as she saw him coming round the corner. She met him at the door. They greeted one another with a kiss. Together they sat down to their frugal meal. There was only *soupe aux pois* and bread for the



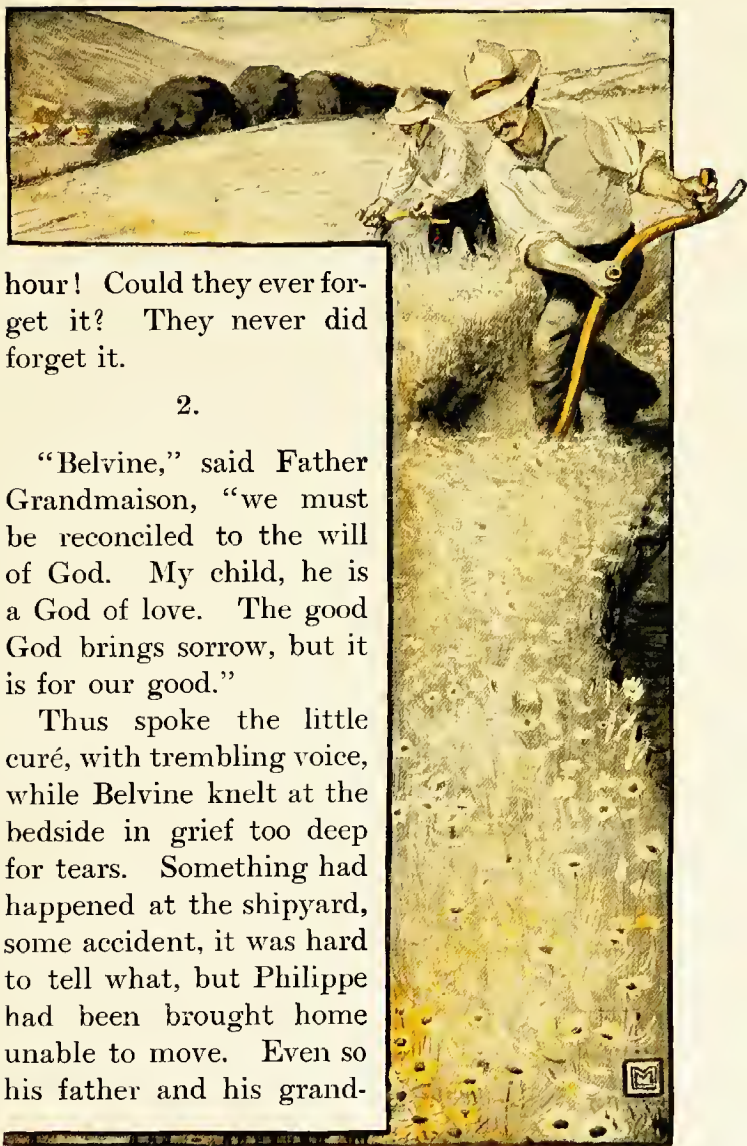
first course, and wild strawberries and bread for the second, but it was enough. They were not rich. They had nothing but Philippe's daily wage. They had no relations living. They were alone, they two, in the world. But that was no trouble. It was enough that they were together. So Belvine said and so said also Father Grandmaison, the little curé of St. Sauveur. St. Sauveur was not a rich parish as it is now, and Father Grandmaison lived in a very little house. He, too, was poor, but he was their friend. He had gotten Philippe his place at the shipyard. He would also find sale for all the stockings and sashes and tuques that Belvine might knit. For each piece she would get two sous more than any other woman in Quebec, she could knit so well.

All was prosperous. There was no trouble; that is, there was only one. There is always one little trouble to keep us from being too happy. It was a debt. It was not a large debt; only three pounds and five shillings. It had been more than that, but Belvine had



paid already two pounds and ten shillings, her savings for three years, while she had been domestic at the house of one of the rich men of St. Sauveur. It was for her trousseau, of course. That was necessary. Also Philippe had bought a new coat for the ceremony. It was the debt of both and both would pay it. The great house of Laviolette et Fils would wait. M. Laviolette himself had said so. "I trust you, mademoiselle," he had said. "I knew your father. He was a good man. And Philippe, too, he has the heart of gold." Ah, those words! How they did cheer the soul! Yes, they would pay very soon, perhaps in two months.

At dinner they talked it all over, but when they went to walk on the Esplanade they forgot all but the happiness of being together. The band played so beautifully. The soldiers looked so fine in their red coats and tall beavers. The neighbors smiled on them and wished them good luck. What could be better in this world? Ah, the happiness of that

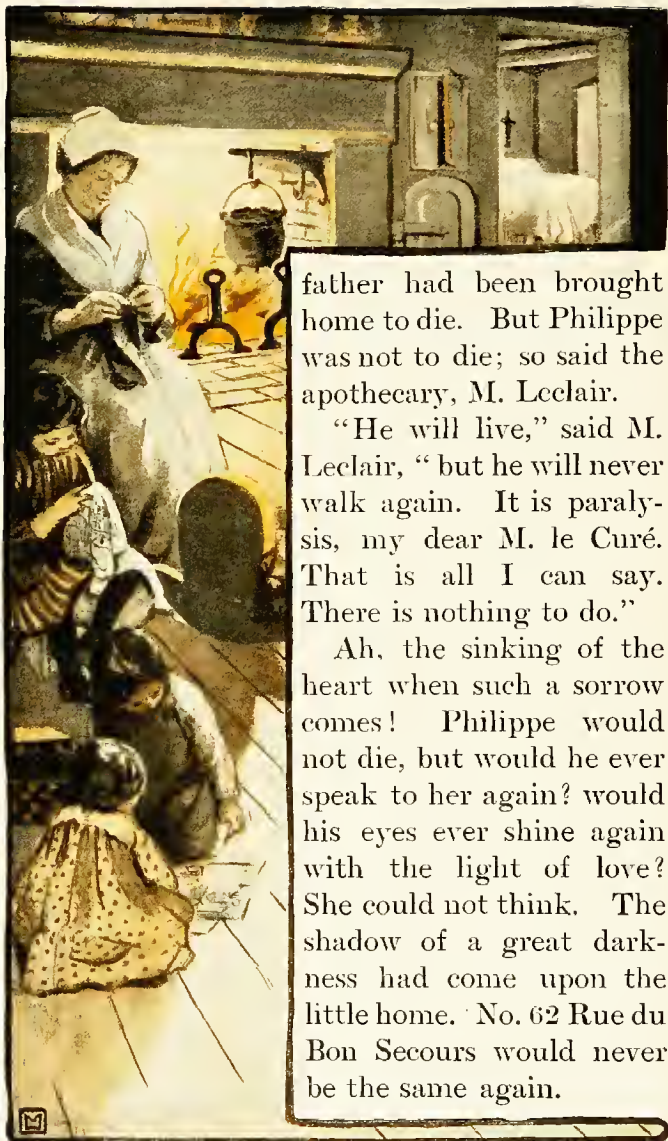


hour! Could they ever forget it? They never did forget it.

2.

“Belvine,” said Father Grandmaison, “we must be reconciled to the will of God. My child, he is a God of love. The good God brings sorrow, but it is for our good.”

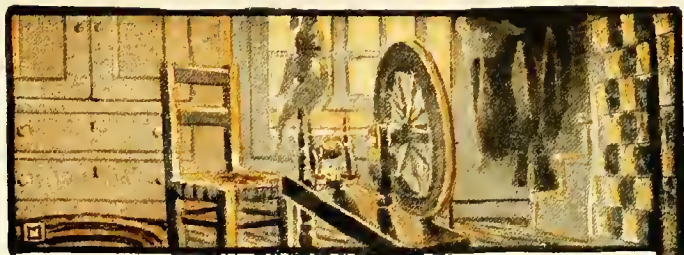
Thus spoke the little curé, with trembling voice, while Belvine knelt at the bedside in grief too deep for tears. Something had happened at the shipyard, some accident, it was hard to tell what, but Philippe had been brought home unable to move. Even so his father and his grand-



father had been brought home to die. But Philippe was not to die; so said the apothecary, M. Leclair.

"He will live," said M. Leclair, "but he will never walk again. It is paralysis, my dear M. le Curé. That is all I can say. There is nothing to do."

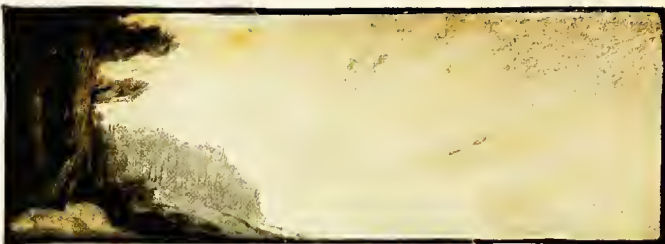
Ah, the sinking of the heart when such a sorrow comes! Philippe would not die, but would he ever speak to her again? would his eyes ever shine again with the light of love? She could not think. The shadow of a great darkness had come upon the little home. No. 62 Rue du Bon Secours would never be the same again.



Day after day she watched by the bedside of the man she loved. Day after day came the good curé with words of comfort. Philippe would not die, no indeed. She could see him improve from day to day. Back to his great brown eyes came the love-light she had so longed to see. For many days he could only look his love and gratitude, for he could not speak. Then after many days he began to speak. Philippe then could tell Belvine what he had been thinking all these long days. There was joy in No. 62 Rue du Bon Secours. The good God had not forgotten them. From the face of the dear Christ above the fireplace a smile of benediction seemed to come.

By and by Philippe could crawl about the house, just a little, that was all. There was never any more improvement. There never would be any, said M. Leclair. So they gave up that hope. But there was love in their lives and they were happy.

It is true Philippe could not work, and poverty was to be their lot for many years.



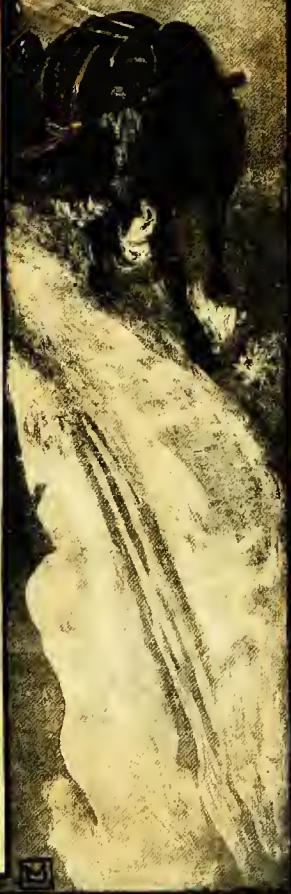
It is also true that they did not need much. There was no rent; M. Thibeaudeau had seen to that. Then Belvine was always knitting, and there was always a good price for those thick, warm stockings and sashes and tuques. The good curé had seen to that. So they were happy, more happy than they had thought possible.

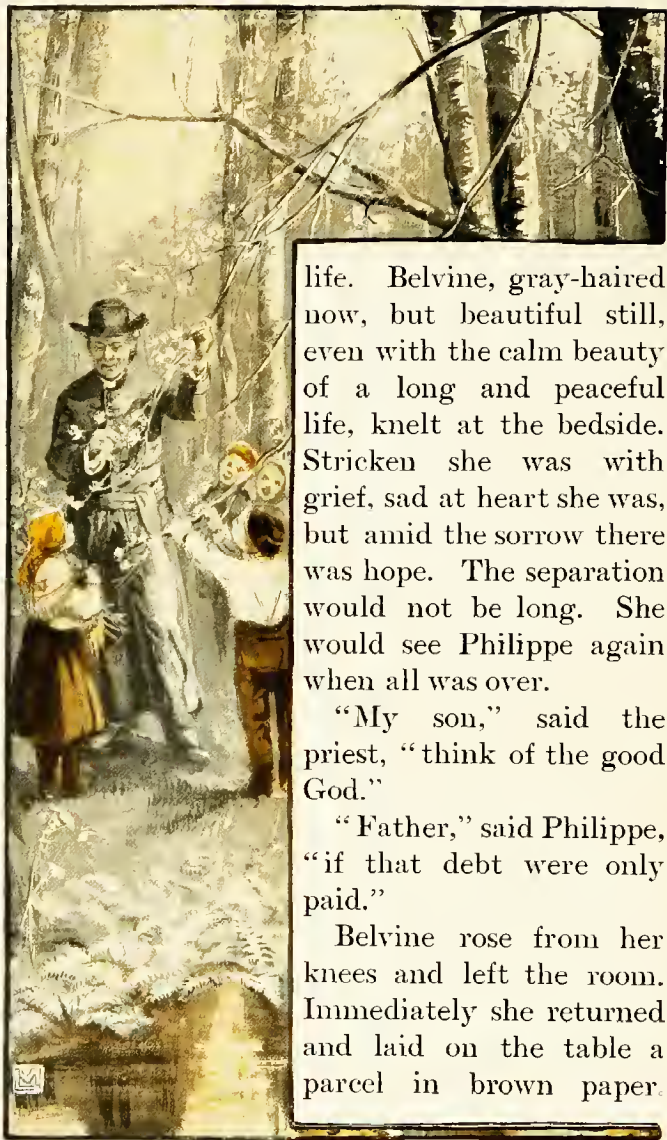
Thus the years passed away, many years. For such lives the present is more than the past, and the future is nothing. Three memories only remained ever with them. There was the memory of the day when they stood before the altar and Father Grandmaison pronounced the words that made them man and wife before the world and before God. Then there was the dreadful memory of that day of sadness, when to Belvine it seemed as though the light of life had gone out forever. And last, and every day present, was the memory of that debt. Every year was begun in the expectation that the end of twelve months would see all paid. Every day commenced



with the hope of an extra sou toward the final liquidation. But it was not possible. Something would always swallow up the cherished savings of the past. Day after day and year after year came and went, and still the one great hope remained unfulfilled. Yet it was a hope, and one that gave to Belvine and to Philippe great comfort in the hour of darkness.

Thus they lived in peaceful simplicity for thirty-five years. Then the end came. Philippe lay dying. Father Grandmaison, now an aged man and feeble, held his hand and administered to him the bread of





life. Belvine, gray-haired now, but beautiful still, even with the calm beauty of a long and peaceful life, knelt at the bedside. Stricken she was with grief, sad at heart she was, but amid the sorrow there was hope. The separation would not be long. She would see Philippe again when all was over.

"My son," said the priest, "think of the good God."

"Father," said Philippe, "if that debt were only paid."

Belvine rose from her knees and left the room. Immediately she returned and laid on the table a parcel in brown paper.



Inside of this there were smaller parcels of little silver coins—threepences and sixpences, with five and ten-cent pieces of the new coinage. There lay her savings for thirty-five years. Not a word had she said about it to Philippe in all that time, hoping for a grand surprise.

“And now! Philippe,” she said, “it is all there, all but one shilling, twenty cents in the new money.”

It was twenty years since the new money had been introduced.

“You see, dear, it will soon be paid, perhaps in one month.” Philippe’s eyes glistened. Father Grandmaison was a man of judgment and did not offer to make up the balance of that heroic account.

“Let us thank God, my children,” he said, and it was not in Latin that the good curé prayed. While he prayed, the good God received the soul of poor, no, of rich Philippe. Beholding the translation the two friends rejoiced through their tears.

The debt was paid; that is, Belvine now holds a receipt in full from the heirs of M. Laviolette, long since gone to the rest of the faithful. With much trouble at last Belvine found one of the heirs and thus communicated with the rest, now scattered far and wide. They retained the honorable spirit of their father.

“Why did you not tell him,” they wrote, “that he might have canceled the debt before he died? We will do as our father would have done.” And this is the quittance they sent to Belvine:

“The heirs of the estate Laviolette recognize with great satisfaction the honorable conduct of M. and Mme. Lepine in regard to the debt of three pounds and five shillings, contracted so many years ago, and hereby declare the obligation discharged in full.”



II.
FATHER GRANDMAISON.





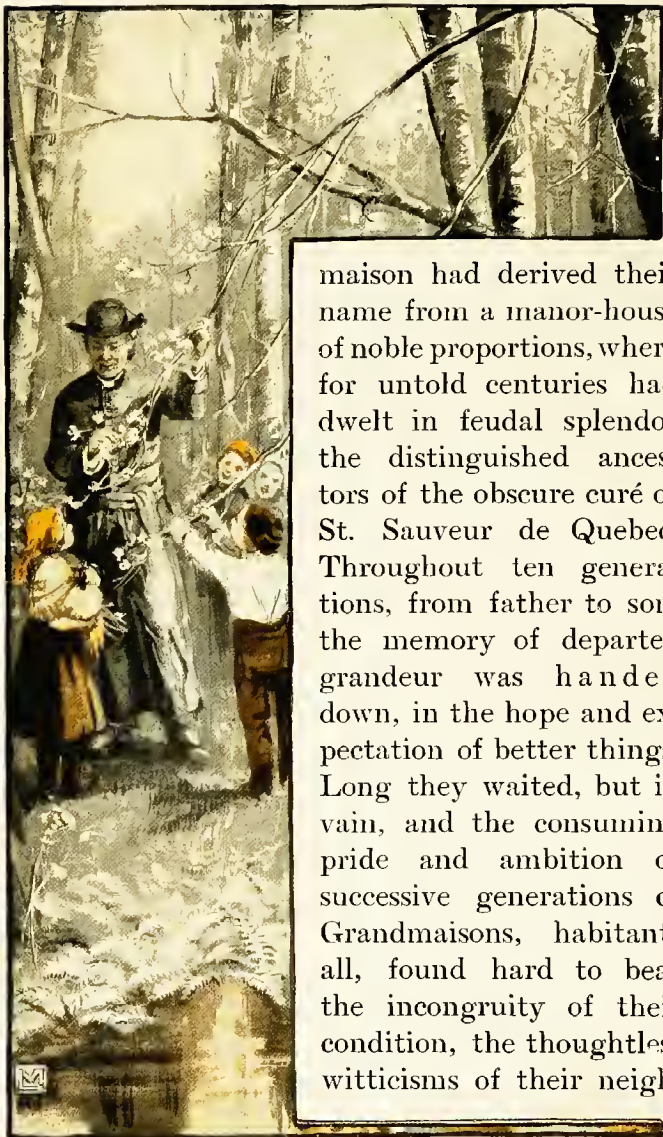
FATHER GRANDMAISON.



FATHER GRANDMAISON.

1.

FATHER GRANDMAISON was a good man and a faithful priest, yet he was possessed by a worldly ambition, an ambition that for many years had taken away his peace, and at times seemed to obscure the face of God. This ambition belonged not to the good father as an individual, but as a member of a family, which, though bearing a great name and justly claiming an honorable history, had for three hundred years inhabited the dwellings of the humble. It had not always been thus, for tradition had it that in former times, in far-away Brittany, the family of Grand-



maison had derived their name from a manor-house of noble proportions, where for untold centuries had dwelt in feudal splendor the distinguished ancestors of the obscure curé of St. Sauveur de Quebec. Throughout ten generations, from father to son, the memory of departed grandeur was handed down, in the hope and expectation of better things. Long they waited, but in vain, and the consuming pride and ambition of successive generations of Grandmaisons, habitants all, found hard to bear the incongruity of their condition, the thoughtless witticisms of their neigh-



bors, the pain of hope deferred, and the consciousness of destiny unfulfilled.

Pierre Grandmaison was born in a log cabin, and when he became curé of the parish St. Sauveur, the presbytery, his residence, was a little stone house of two rooms, adjoining the little church. But he was a young man and courageous, and, without regard to past failure or present disappointment, even in the day of small things he continued to cherish the hope of one time dwelling in a house becoming his name and the tradition of his ancestors. When this hope should be fulfilled, then would harmony be restored between name and fact, between tradition and destiny; then would that which was fitting be accomplished; the great name would be joined to the great house; all the parish would approve; all the Grandmaisons of the Province, and they were many, would point with pride to their true and only representative, and even the departed ancestors would look down from heaven with satisfaction upon so desirable a consummation.



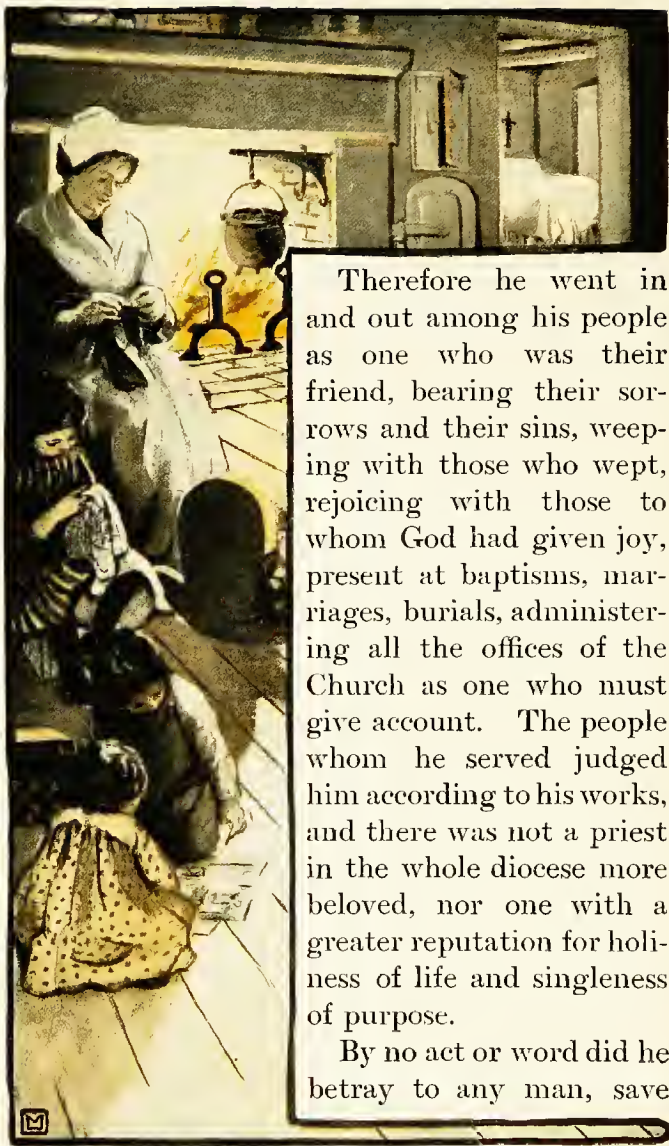
Thus thought Father Grandmaison in his moments of worldly pride and selfish ambition. In his secret heart the curé felt that the thought was sin, and that he, who had devoted himself to the service of Christ and His Church, had no right to cherish, as the desire of his heart, any worldly ambition, any earthly hope. Therefore the good priest, in his moments of faith and consecration, fiercely repudiated the ambition of his lower self, violently dismissed the earthly ideal from the threshold of thought, earnestly fixed his attention upon the cross of Christ, and yet, even in the hour of purest devotion, the curé knew, in his inmost soul, that if the Master should come to him and ask in wistful tones—"Pierre Grandmaison, lovest thou Me?"—he would be obliged to confess with tears that his most ardent hope concerned not the coming of the kingdom of his Lord, but the erection of a visible monument to a weak and foolish earthly pride.

But Father Grandmaison was a man of



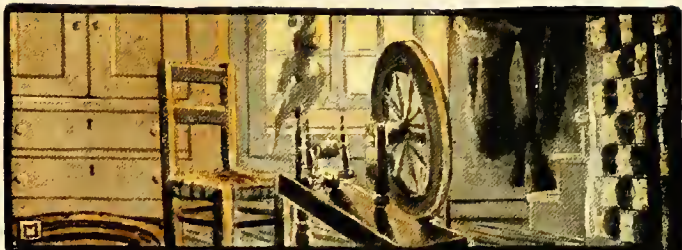
character, and, however much he might desire the unattainable, he did not allow any vain wish to interfere with the work of life. Because of the restless ambition which possessed his soul, he threw himself with more energy into the manifold duties of his parish. Never was more faithful priest. Never did servant of God more truly represent the Master he professed to serve. Because he knew that his was at best a half-hearted service, for this very reason he determined that, in so far as externals are concerned, there should be no failure in fulfilling the last letter of the law.





Therefore he went in and out among his people as one who was their friend, bearing their sorrows and their sins, weeping with those who wept, rejoicing with those to whom God had given joy, present at baptisms, marriages, burials, administering all the offices of the Church as one who must give account. The people whom he served judged him according to his works, and there was not a priest in the whole diocese more beloved, nor one with a greater reputation for holiness of life and singleness of purpose.

By no act or word did he betray to any man, save

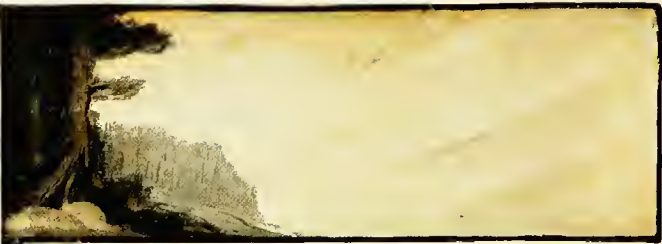


to his confessor, the secret wish of his heart. That wish, like a smoldering fire, glowed ever in his breast, inextinguishable, but never blazing forth to the light of day ; on the one hand a motive and source of holy life and activity, on the other a spirit of inward condemnation.

2.

When Father Grandmaison first came to the parish of St. Sauveur the parish was poor and there was little prospect of improvement in material things. But the curé had come prepared to wait. He waited, and the years passed away, one after the other, very swiftly. His dark hair turned to silver-gray, then to silver-white. Children he had baptized had children and grandchildren of their own, but the parish church and the presbytery remained unchanged. So also the river and the mountains.

Then came a change, and because of various circumstances, the parish received a sudden influx of population. Prosperity began.

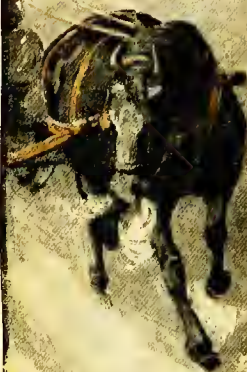


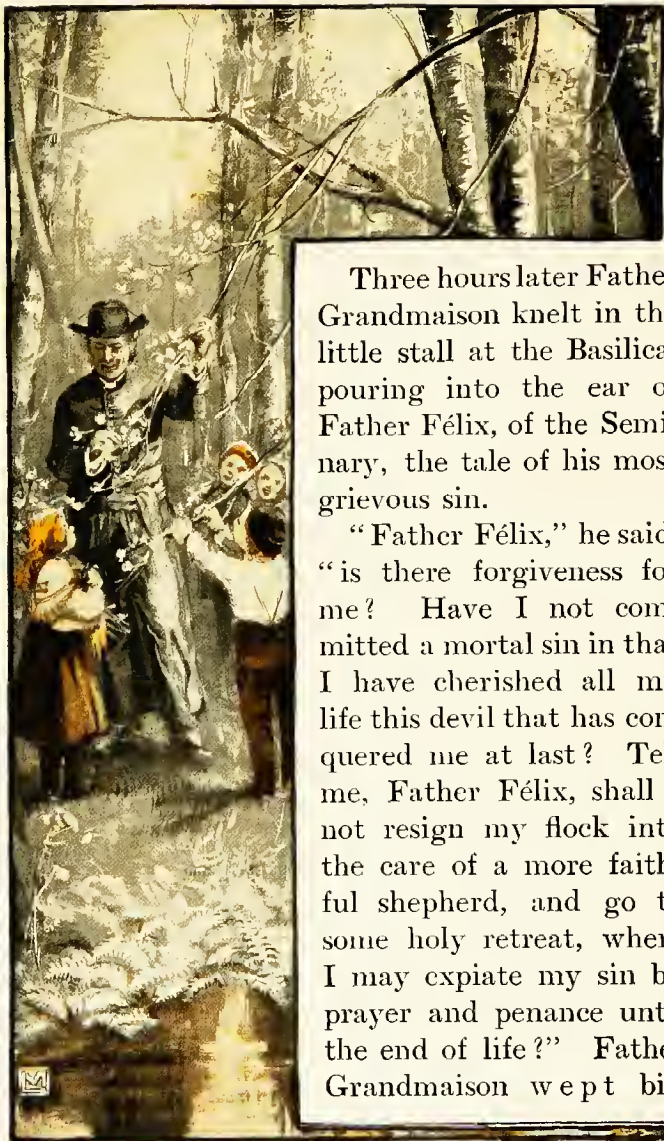
Soon the little church was too small for the congregations and it was necessary to build another. Thus it came to pass that St. Sauveur rejoiced in the possession of a fine new edifice of stone, where a thousand worshipers might together kneel in prayer, while from the lofty steeple pealed forth in solemn tones the largest bell in the whole diocese. Without doubt the work accomplished was creditable to the curé, worthy of the parish, and pleasing to God.

At last came the hour when the little curé felt that surely now the hope of his life might be fulfilled, and without sin. Silent he had waited these many years. The parish at last had prospered. The people, many of them, were rich, and could well afford to contribute liberally to the building of a presbytery the like of which was not to be found in ten parishes. At last the ancestral ambition of the Grandmaisons would be fulfilled. In the person of the once insignificant parish priest they would come to their own again and once more sit upon their throne of pride. From this



serene elevation how he would look down with scorn upon the injurious scoffers of former days, who had dared to make light of the just pretensions of a family descended from the *ancienne noblesse*! Ah, the *canaille*, how he despised them! And the little old man stamped his feet as he thought of the miserable offenders, long since gone to that place where rich and poor meet together. But the curé stamped his feet, clenched his hands, and uttered words the like of which had never passed his lips before. A slumbering demon was awakened in the bosom of Pierre Grandmaison.





Three hours later Father Grandmaison knelt in the little stall at the Basilica, pouring into the ear of Father Félix, of the Seminary, the tale of his most grievous sin.

“Father Félix,” he said, “is there forgiveness for me? Have I not committed a mortal sin in that I have cherished all my life this devil that has conquered me at last? Tell me, Father Félix, shall I not resign my flock into the care of a more faithful shepherd, and go to some holy retreat, where I may expiate my sin by prayer and penance until the end of life?” Father Grandmaison wept bit-



terly and tears of sympathy glistened in the eyes of Father Félix.

“My dear friend,” said the confessor, “let me ask you a few questions. Have you ever deliberately consented to the desire? Have you ever, except in thought, preferred for a moment this wish of yours to the welfare of our holy Church? Have you ever caused a single penny of the funds of the parish to be diverted from lawful ends for the sake of securing the fulfillment of your desire? Have you ever publicly or privately spoken of this ambition of your life?”

Father Grandmaison was obliged to say, somewhat reluctantly, that he had never done any of these things.

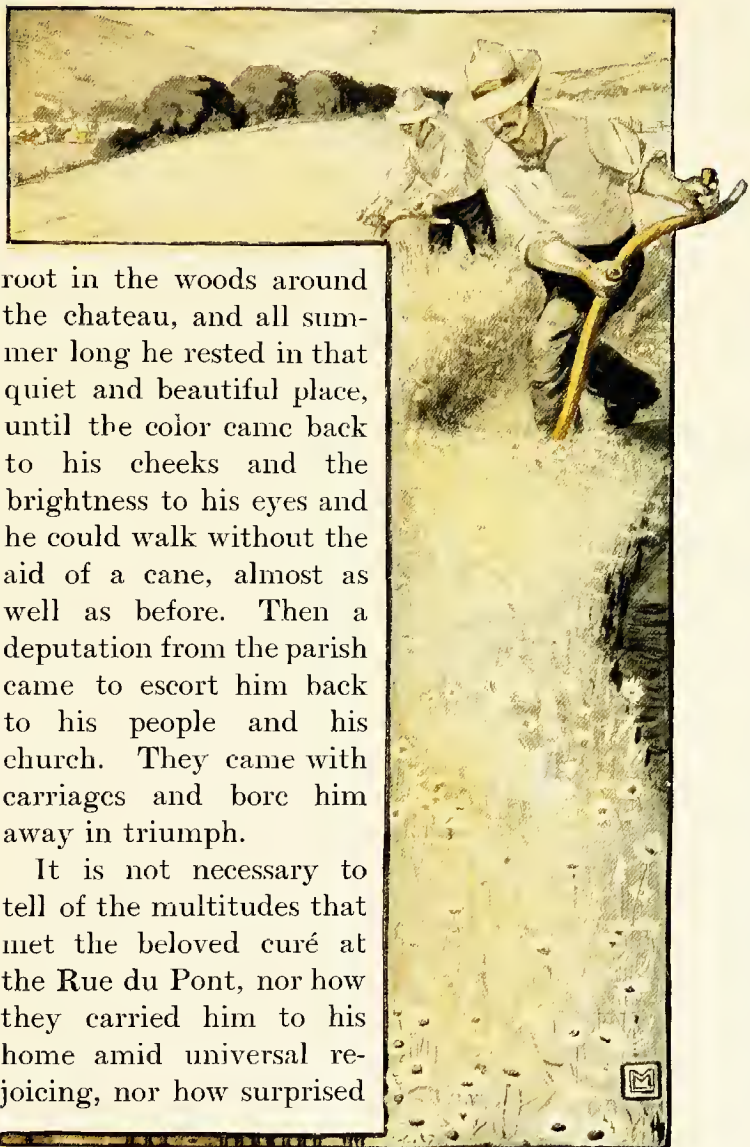
“Then,” said Father Félix, “I declare to you that your thought has been no sin, since it has not partaken in the least degree of the nature of intention. You have never intended to sacrifice the welfare of the Church to your carnal desire, and, therefore, I repeat, you have done no wrong. As for the nervous out-



break of which you tell me, my dear brother, I prescribe, as penance, a month's sojourn at our beautiful retreat, Chatcau Bellevue, where, amid the pines, you shall rest and pray and breathe the pure air and look upon God's green hills, and may God give you peace as He this hour forgives your sin."

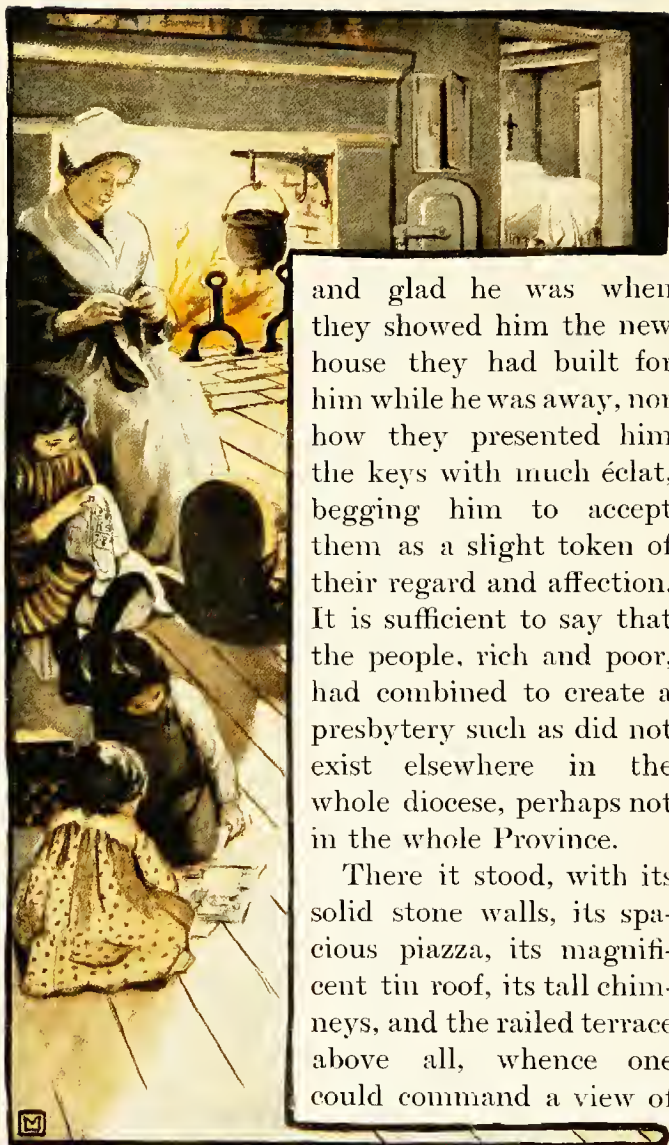
3.

Father Grandmaison's sojourn at Chateau Bellevue was prolonged. When he went to the retreat the maples were red with the frosts of October. While the leaves fell and the autumn winds blew and the snows of winter descended upon field and river and mountain, the little curé lay prostrate and unconscious, between life and death. At the close of winter he sat at the window and saw the snow melt from the mountain side and great masses of ice float down the river until the stream was clear and the first ships came up with the early birds. Toward the end of May he gathered the trillium and the blood-



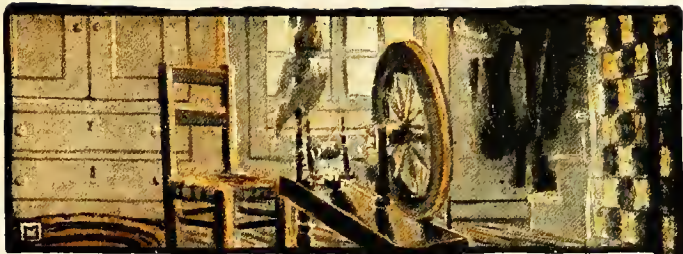
root in the woods around the chateau, and all summer long he rested in that quiet and beautiful place, until the color came back to his cheeks and the brightness to his eyes and he could walk without the aid of a cane, almost as well as before. Then a deputation from the parish came to escort him back to his people and his church. They came with carriages and bore him away in triumph.

It is not necessary to tell of the multitudes that met the beloved curé at the Rue du Pont, nor how they carried him to his home amid universal rejoicing, nor how surprised



and glad he was when they showed him the new house they had built for him while he was away, nor how they presented him the keys with much *éclat*, begging him to accept them as a slight token of their regard and affection. It is sufficient to say that the people, rich and poor, had combined to create a presbytery such as did not exist elsewhere in the whole diocese, perhaps not in the whole Province.

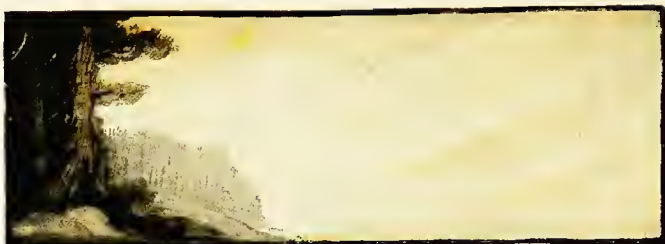
There it stood, with its solid stone walls, its spacious piazza, its magnificent tin roof, its tall chimneys, and the railed terrace above all, whence one could command a view of



river, plain and mountain unsurpassed in all the world. And the interior, how splendid it was, every room with new rag carpets on the floor and holy pictures on the walls! Then there was a box stove in every room, to secure comfort throughout the long winter. Also the kitchen was a masterpiece of its kind, large enough, it seemed, to contain half the parish. Altogether, the people were proud of what they had done, and delighted to be able to give the good curé such a surprise on returning from his long absence.

Father Grandmaison was overcome. As he stood on the piazza with bared head, his white hair shining in the sunlight, he was unable to find words suitable for the occasion. He could only say:

“My friends, it is a long time that I have desired to live in a house like this. I had hoped, but I had also ceased to hope. But you have to-day given me great happiness, and, my friends, I thank you. You are too good to me. I have not deserved it. May God bless you!”



4.

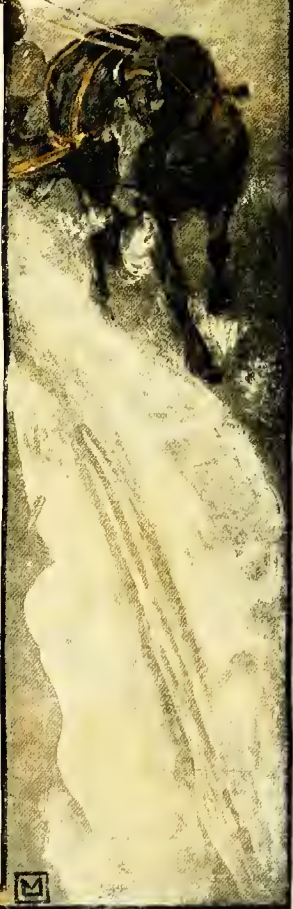
Having attained the summit of his ambition, Father Grandmaison was surprised to find himself sad at heart. Seated upon an eminence far above the majority of his fellow-men, he longed for the companionship of the poor and lowly, and his heart still vibrated in unison with the heart-throbs of the common people. What bootied after all the strain of noble blood of the race of Grandmaison, when diluted with ninety-nine parts of Gagnon, Hébert, Trembly, Boucher and the rest? How melodious the sound of these names! How the rich habitant blood coursed through his veins as he thought of the log cabins of his ancestors, their homely fare, their songs and jests around the evening fire, the warm clasp of the hand, the tear-drop of the eye!

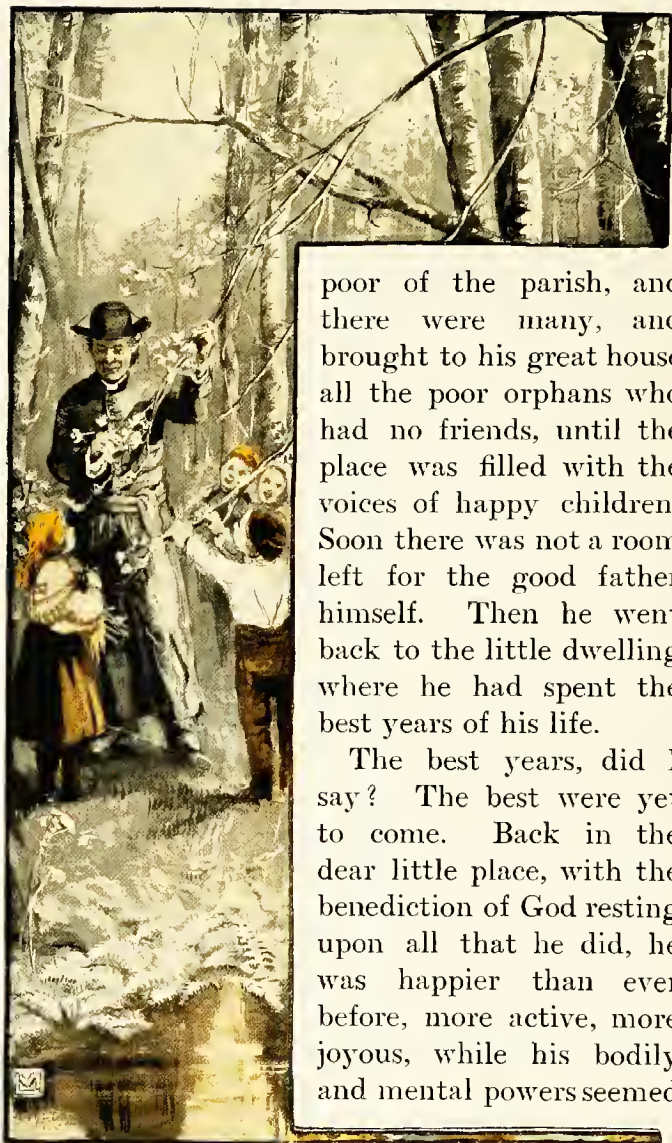
And this grand new house, with its massive walls, its shining roof, its broad spaces, its strange furniture, what comfort did it bring



to the heart? How could things like these fill up the emptiness of the soul? When he said to himself, "This is happiness," a voice within him seemed to reply, "Thou fool!" When he tried to feast on the grandeur about him, it seemed to him like the husks of the parable, fit only for swine. Then, like the lost prodigal, he said aloud, "I will arise and go to my father's house, to the place where I was born, to the humble people whom I have loved and among whom I must live and die."

Thus it came to pass that Father Grandmaison went out among the very





poor of the parish, and there were many, and brought to his great house all the poor orphans who had no friends, until the place was filled with the voices of happy children. Soon there was not a room left for the good father himself. Then he went back to the little dwelling where he had spent the best years of his life.

The best years, did I say? The best were yet to come. Back in the dear little place, with the benediction of God resting upon all that he did, he was happier than ever before, more active, more joyous, while his bodily and mental powers seemed



rejuvenated every day. People who had feared that the curé would soon die began to think that he would live forever. Only the very old people remembered the time when Father Grandmaison first came to St. Sauveur. To all others it seemed as though he had always been with them, and none thought of his going away, for he was to them like the ever-flowing St. Lawrence or the everlasting Laurentian Mountains. Thus passed his days like the steady flowing of a strong, peaceful river, without any fear of the end, or any thought but of work to be done and service to be rendered.

One summer evening, as the sun was sinking behind the mountains, Father Grandmaison sat in the little garden reading his favorite chapter from the Holy Evangel. But his eyes wandered from the sacred page, across the pleasant valley of the St. Charles, up to where the twin spires of Charlesbourg shone blood-red in the gleam of the setting sun. Beyond were the dark-blue, fir-clad mountains,

and above them a mass of silver-gray clouds edged with ruddy gold. Suddenly, through an opening in the clouds, the broad beams of the sun shot forth, painting the whole sky in crimson and gold, and to the beholder it seemed as though a flaming archangel stood waiting for him at the open gate of the celestial city.

The light of that glory shone in the face of the old curé and gilded his silver hair. Looking once more on the page of the book, he read aloud the words of comfort, for years graven on his heart: “*In domo mei Patris mansiones multae sunt.*” Looking up again at the glorious shining gateway, with face aglow and eyes that saw a vision, he rose to his feet, stretched out his hands, and said, in a strong and joyous voice, “My God, it is for me!” Then he sank back into the chair, and before the glory had faded from river and mountain and sky, the soul of Father Grandmaison had entered the house of God.



III.
THE PEACEMAKER.





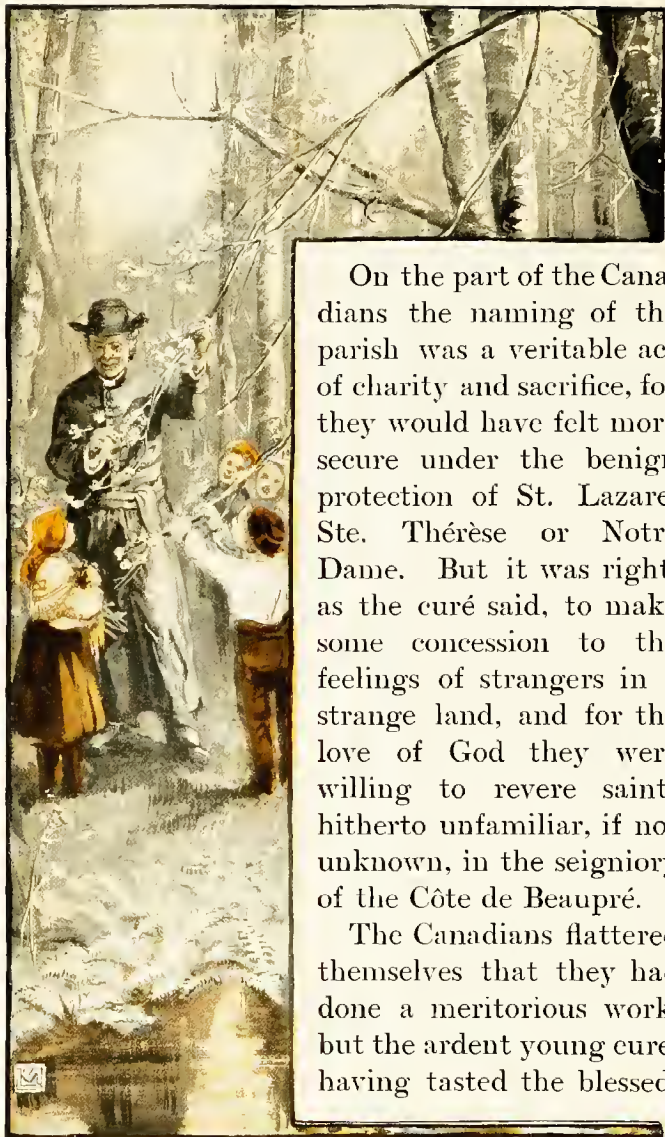
THE PEACEMAKER.



THE PEACEMAKER.

1.

IT was all because of the plans of the pious zeal of François Xavier Lachapelle, the new priest of the newly created parish of Ste. Brigitte de Laval. All things were new in the mountain parish, even the name, given by the good fathers of the Seminary, with the advice and consent of curé and people, in order to conciliate the strangers from beyond the sea, to make them feel at home in the land of their adoption, that by-and-by they might forget, if possible, the hills and valleys, the streams and lakes of Cork and Bantry and Killarney.



On the part of the Canadians the naming of the parish was a veritable act of charity and sacrifice, for they would have felt more secure under the benign protection of St. Lazare, Ste. Thérèse or Notre Dame. But it was right, as the curé said, to make some concession to the feelings of strangers in a strange land, and for the love of God they were willing to revere saints hitherto unfamiliar, if not unknown, in the seigniory of the Côte de Beaupré.

The Canadians flattered themselves that they had done a meritorious work, but the ardent young cure, having tasted the blessed-



ness of making peace, conceived the thought that still more could be done, to the end that Canadians and Irish might dwell together in love and harmony, one in spirit, as they were already one in faith and baptism.

It was indeed a question of baptism in the mind of Father Lachepelle, and his cherished plan came to sudden maturity on the eve of Christmas, in the year of grace one thousand eight hundred and forty-nine.

The storm of that night is still remembered by the oldest inhabitant, who delights to tell of uprooted trees, blockaded roads and houses buried deep beneath drifts of snow. It was a tempestuous night, with much snow and wind. The curé, in his little cabin, was not sorry to have plenty of wood for the fire and good buffalo robes for his bed. With satisfaction he was thinking of the night's repose, when suddenly there came a loud knocking at the door, and the sound of a man's voice in trouble and alarm.

"It is I, Phileas Lafontaine," said the voice,



“But open quick, M’sieu’ le Curé; there is no time to lose.”

“What’s the matter?” said the priest, “Is it Madame or the little one who has need of me?”

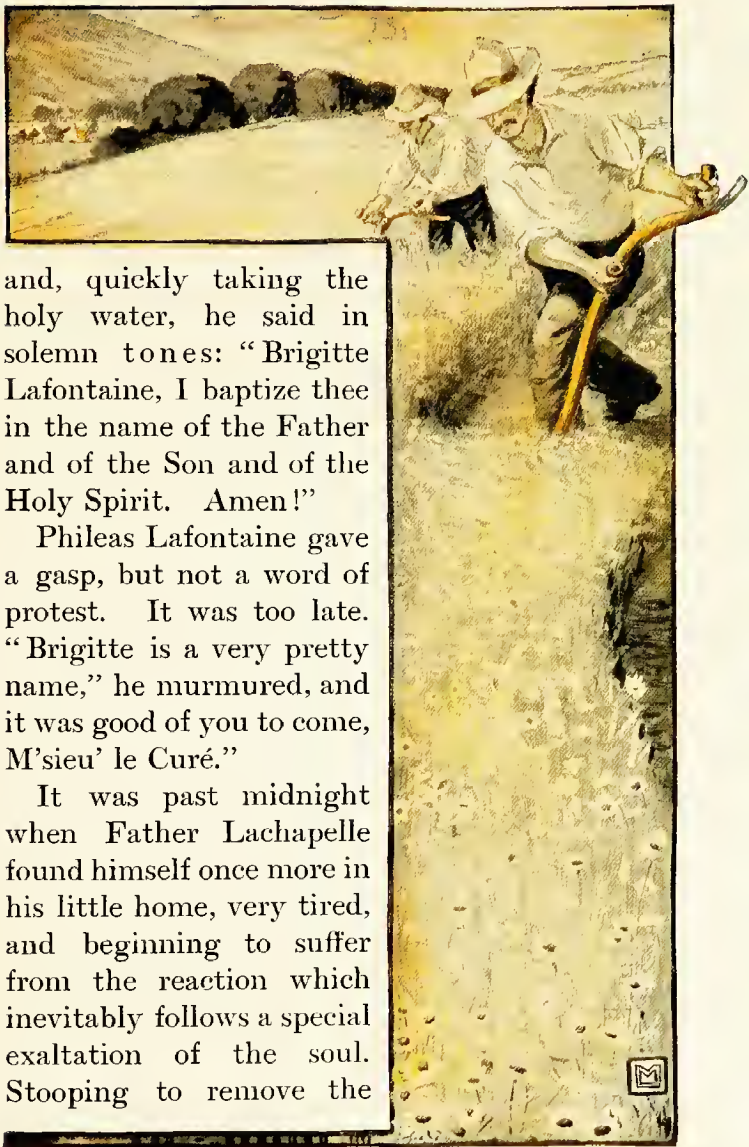
“Madame is well, M’sieu’ Lachepelle, but O! M’sieu’ le Curé, the little one, perhaps she will not live, and you will at least give her the sacrament, in case, to make sure.”

The young priest, ever ready to do his duty, and above all in the extremity of death, set out in the storm, and, after a long struggle with the drifting snow, arrived at the cabin of Phileas Lafontaine.

“What name?” said the curé, as he made ready to administer the sacred rite.

“Ah, M’sieu’ le Curé,” said Phileas, “if you would only choose the name it would be an honor indeed. The mother has set her heart upon it, and the little one might perhaps live. Who can tell? If you only would, M’sieu’ le Curé.”

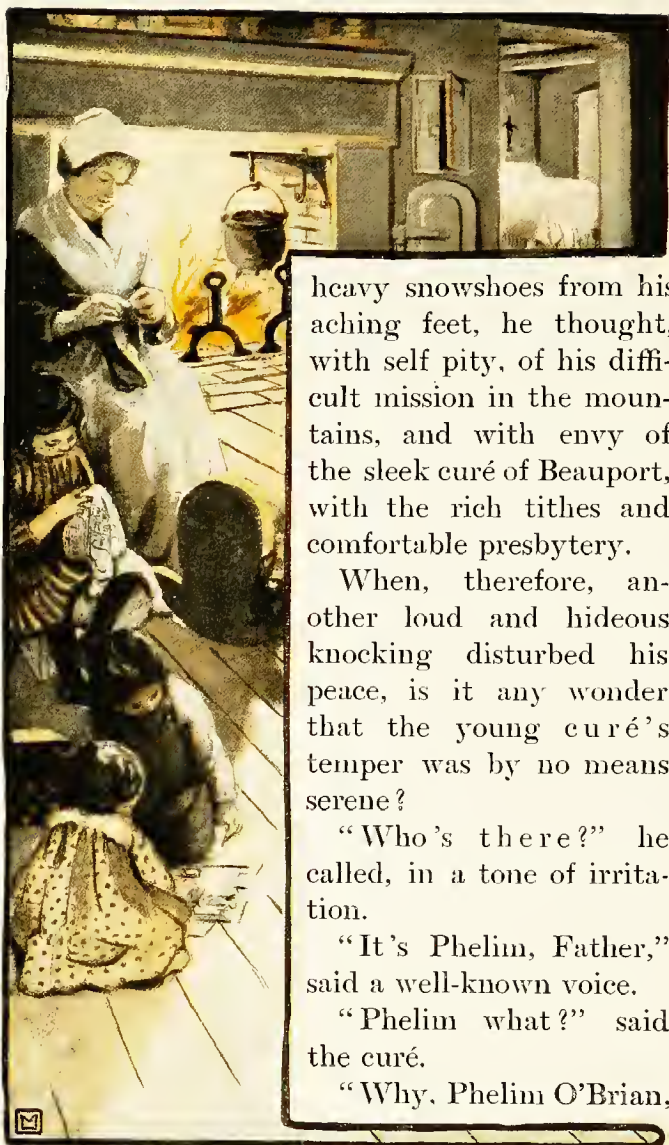
“With pleasure,” said the young priest,



and, quickly taking the holy water, he said in solemn tones: "Brigitte Lafontaine, I baptize thee in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen!"

Phileas Lafontaine gave a gasp, but not a word of protest. It was too late. "Brigitte is a very pretty name," he murmured, and it was good of you to come, M'sieu' le Curé."

It was past midnight when Father Lachapelle found himself once more in his little home, very tired, and beginning to suffer from the reaction which inevitably follows a special exaltation of the soul. Stooping to remove the



heavy snowshoes from his aching feet, he thought, with self pity, of his difficult mission in the mountains, and with envy of the sleek curé of Beauport, with the rich tithes and comfortable presbytery.

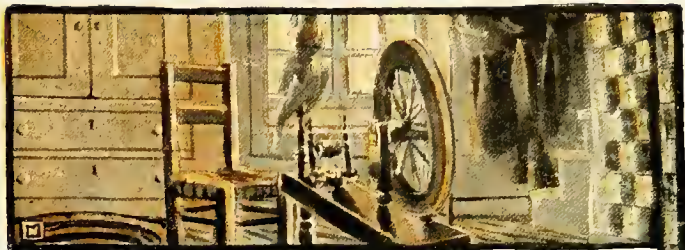
When, therefore, another loud and hideous knocking disturbed his peace, is it any wonder that the young curé's temper was by no means serene?

"Who's there?" he called, in a tone of irritation.

"It's Phelim, Father," said a well-known voice.

"Phelim what?" said the curé.

"Why, Phelim O'Brian,



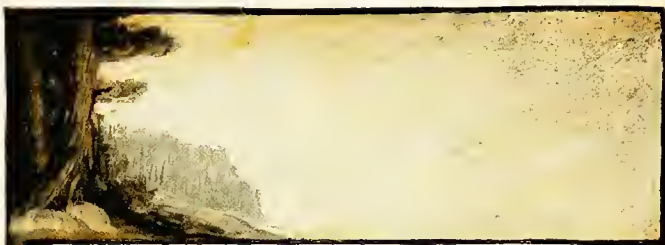
Father; and for God's sake come to my house and baptize my little boy before he dies, Father."

"What now, Phelim?" said the priest, as the Irishman's scared face appeared at the door.

"Father Lachapelle, as sure as you live, Father, I woke up in the night, with a start, and the death-watch was ticking in the wall above the baby's cradle, and it never was known to tick like that except when somebody was about to die. It was so, Father, the night before the battle of Clontarf, when my ancestor—"

"Never mind about your ancestors," said the angry priest; "I don't believe in death-watches, nor banshees, nor any such foolishness and I'll not go any fool's errand with you this night, I can tell you that, Phelim O'Brian."

"For God's sake don't talk like that, Father," said Phelim, falling on his knees on the cabin floor. "For the love of God, come



to my house, Father. The child will die, and his soul is in your care; his soul, Father, his his immortal soul. Come this time, Father, and I'll be a better man. I'll not drink; I'll not swear; I'll not tell another lie as long as I live. I'll do anything you say, Father, I'll—"

"O, will you?" said the young priest, recovering his composure. "Then I'll go with you on one condition; and that is that you allow me to name the child, to give him any name I please."

"Surely, Father, that's easy," said Phelim, already repenting his hasty words. "Let's go, Father, or it will be too late."

In the wind that howled through the pines, and shrieked in the balsam tops, the ignorant layman thought he heard the cry of the banshee, and even the enlightened priest could hardly escape the conviction that, in the form of a loup-garou, Satan himself was making vain outcry against the holy work about to be accomplished, which should open the gate

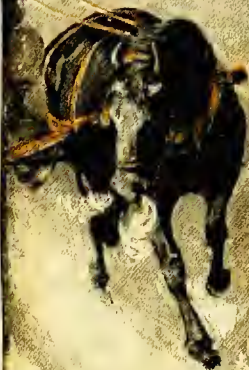


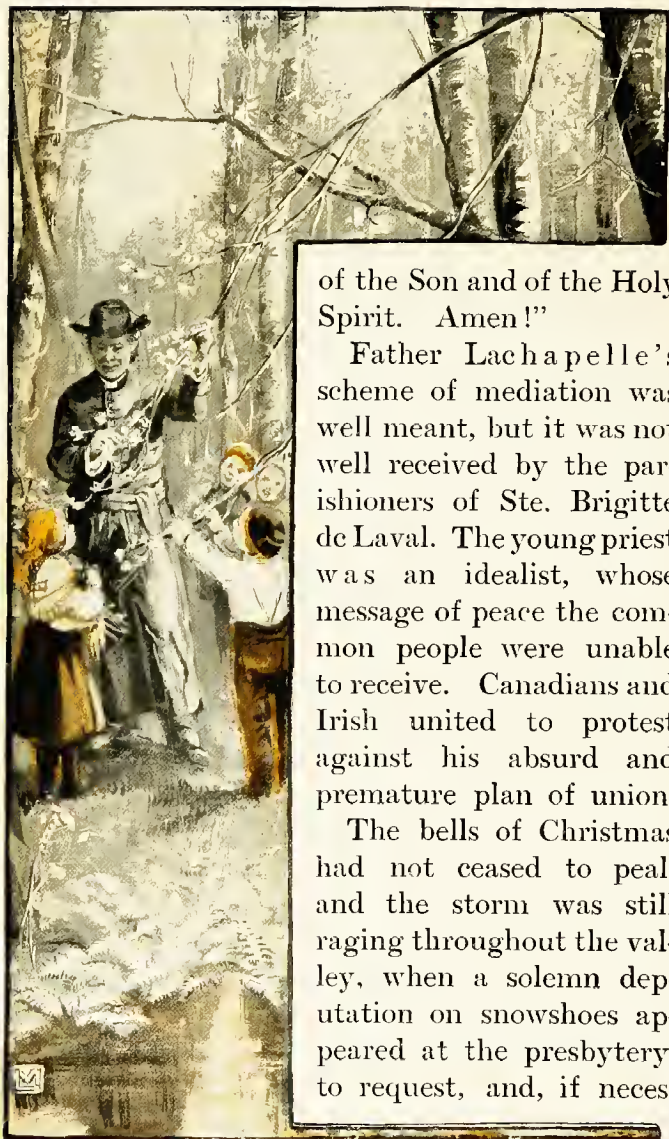
of heaven to an immortal soul, and effect a blessed reconciliation among the members of the Church on earth.

“What name, Phelim?” said the priest, as he prepared to baptize the healthiest Irish baby he had ever seen.

“Phelim and Patrick have been our family names since the world began, but you are to name the child, Father. Anyway, his ancestors in heaven will know him by the color of his hair, name or no name, so it’s all right, Father.”

“Jean Baptiste O’Brian, I baptize thee in the name of the Father and





of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen!"

Father Lachapelle's scheme of mediation was well meant, but it was not well received by the parishioners of Ste. Brigitte de Laval. The young priest was an idealist, whose message of peace the common people were unable to receive. Canadians and Irish united to protest against his absurd and premature plan of union.

The bells of Christmas had not ceased to peal, and the storm was still raging throughout the valley, when a solemn deputation on snowshoes appeared at the presbytery, to request, and, if neces-



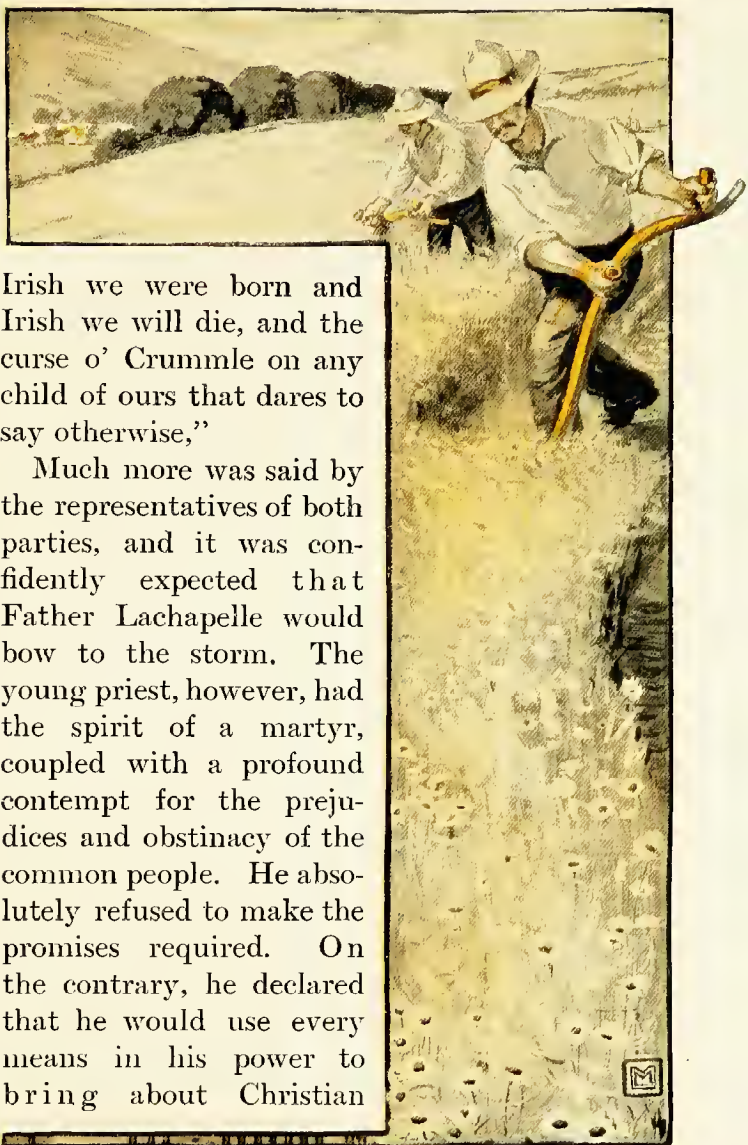
sary, to demand of the young curé some definite assurance of a change of policy. On the part of the ancient inhabitants were Isidore Turcotte, Pamphile Garneau, and Théodule Plamondon. Representing the Irish settlers were Patrick Dawson, Denis Driscoll, and Michael Lafferty.

“M’sieu’ le Curé,” said Isidore Turcotte, when the young priest desired to know for what reason they had come, “we have come to you on behalf of those not yet born, but whom the good God will send to us in time to come. We hope, M’sieu’ le Curé, that it will not be necessary for them to bear names strange to our ears, the names of saints unknown to us until recently, whom we have not been accustomed to venerate, and who, perhaps, take but little interest in us and our children. Our fathers have not found it difficult to find guardian saints for families large and small, without borrowing from Ireland or any other foreign country. M’sieu’ le Curé, we desire to follow the examples of our fathers.



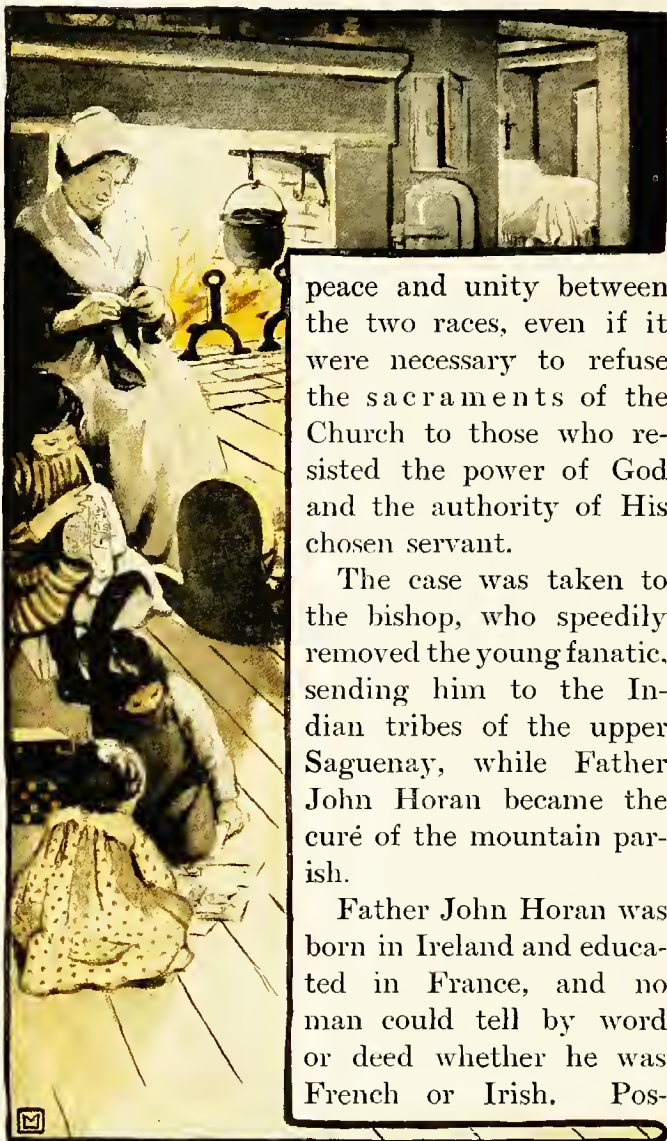
We are willing to live in peace with these Irish, but we do not wish to be like them in any way. We prefer to remain Canadians, as our fathers for many generations.”

“Father Lachapelle,” said Patrick Dawson, resenting the insults of Isidore Turcotte, “I speak on behalf of the holy saints of Ireland, our native land. Who has not heard of Saint Bridget, Saint Denis, Saint Michael, and Saint Patrick? They are known all over the world, even in this God-forsaken country of Canada. Their names are good enough for any habitant that ever was born, but they needn’t take them if they do n’t want them; only we will not have our children called after obscure Frenchmen like Damase, Ignace, Théophile, or Zacharie. Besides, Father, it’s ridiculous to give a French name to an Irish child. Jean Baptiste O’Brian is bad enough, but Théophile Kelly, Zotique Driscoll, Petronille Lafferty—! Lord! Father, it would n’t sound right at all, at all. Anyway, Father Lachapelle, we’ll have none of this foolishness.



Irish we were born and Irish we will die, and the curse o' Crummle on any child of ours that dares to say otherwise,"

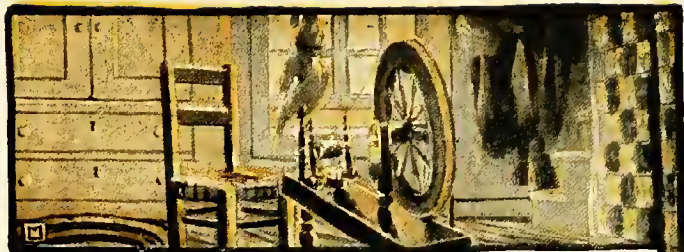
Much more was said by the representatives of both parties, and it was confidently expected that Father Lachapelle would bow to the storm. The young priest, however, had the spirit of a martyr, coupled with a profound contempt for the prejudices and obstinacy of the common people. He absolutely refused to make the promises required. On the contrary, he declared that he would use every means in his power to bring about Christian



peace and unity between the two races, even if it were necessary to refuse the sacraments of the Church to those who resisted the power of God and the authority of His chosen servant.

The case was taken to the bishop, who speedily removed the young fanatic, sending him to the Indian tribes of the upper Saguenay, while Father John Horan became the curé of the mountain parish.

Father John Horan was born in Ireland and educated in France, and no man could tell by word or deed whether he was French or Irish. Pos-



sessed of a sense of humor and a spirit of compromise, he did much to establish good relations between the rival factions.

“Be on good terms with all the saints,” said Father Horan on the occasion of his first sermon to the congregation. “Pray to them all, for you don’t know when you may need their influence. But in giving names to your children, many though they be, it is not possible to remember all the saints in the calendar. Select those whose names you love and in whom you have the greatest confidence. St. Patrick doubtless loves the Irish, although he was born in Britain and educated in France, like myself. St. John the Baptist, although he was a wandering Jew, has a special affection for those who live in the Canadian wilderness. St. Denis, beloved in Ireland, was born in France, and we may all unite in devotion to him. Bridget, sure, was Irish, nothing else. But the saints, whether French or Irish, German or Italian, never quarrel among themselves. They have no time for that. They

pray incessantly for all the world, especially for those committed to their care. My friends, let us be like them.

“As for Brigitte Lafontaine and Jean Baptiste O'Brian,” said Father Horan, “they shall be our little angels of peace and good will in the parish of Ste. Brigitte de Laval.”



IV.
THÉOPHILE.





THÉOPHILE.

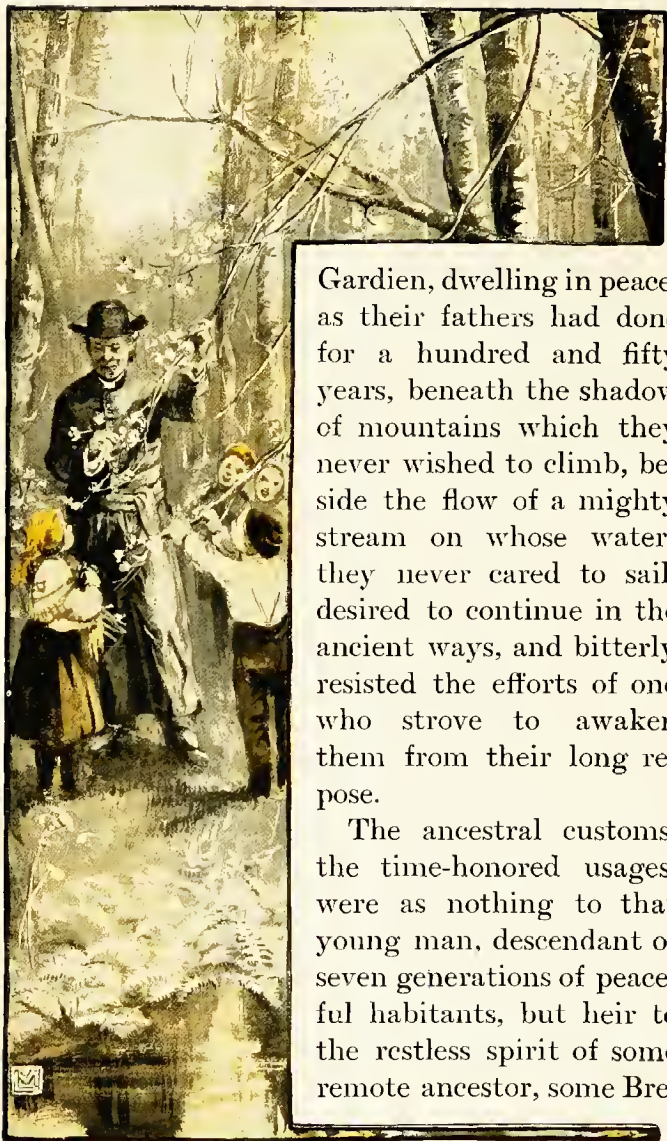


THÉOPHILE.

1.

It was not that Théophile Beaurepaire was rich, nor that he was tall and strong, nor that at times a wicked gleam lit up his black eyes, so that the young men called him a “deuce of a fellow,” and the young women smiled and blushed at the mention of his name. It was for none of these reasons that the good people of L’Ange Gardien, the ancients and the sober middle-aged people, looked askance at Théophile, crossed themselves and whispered, “Infidel,” “Atheist,” “Sacrilegious one,” as he passed by.

It was because the good people of L’Ange



Gardien, dwelling in peace, as their fathers had done for a hundred and fifty years, beneath the shadow of mountains which they never wished to climb, beside the flow of a mighty stream on whose waters they never cared to sail, desired to continue in the ancient ways, and bitterly resisted the efforts of one who strove to awaken them from their long repose.

The ancestral customs, the time-honored usages, were as nothing to that young man, descendant of seven generations of peaceful habitants, but heir to the restless spirit of some remote ancestor, some Bre-



ton pirate or some Norman viking. For he had departed from the trodden paths, removed the old landmarks, despised the tradition of the fathers, and, to those who loved to think of former days, he was a profane person, a breaker of images, a setter-up of strange gods.

Let us tell some of the changes Théophile sought to bring into the parish of L'Ange Gardien.

The ancient haycart, dear to the memory of young and old, with its stout wheels, its strong shafts, its rack and roller, he had set aside in favor of a four-wheeled monster that two horses could hardly draw.

Finding the Canadian horses, finest in the world, unequal to the task, he replaced them with a pair of Clydesdales, with feet like an elephant's and stomachs insatiable.

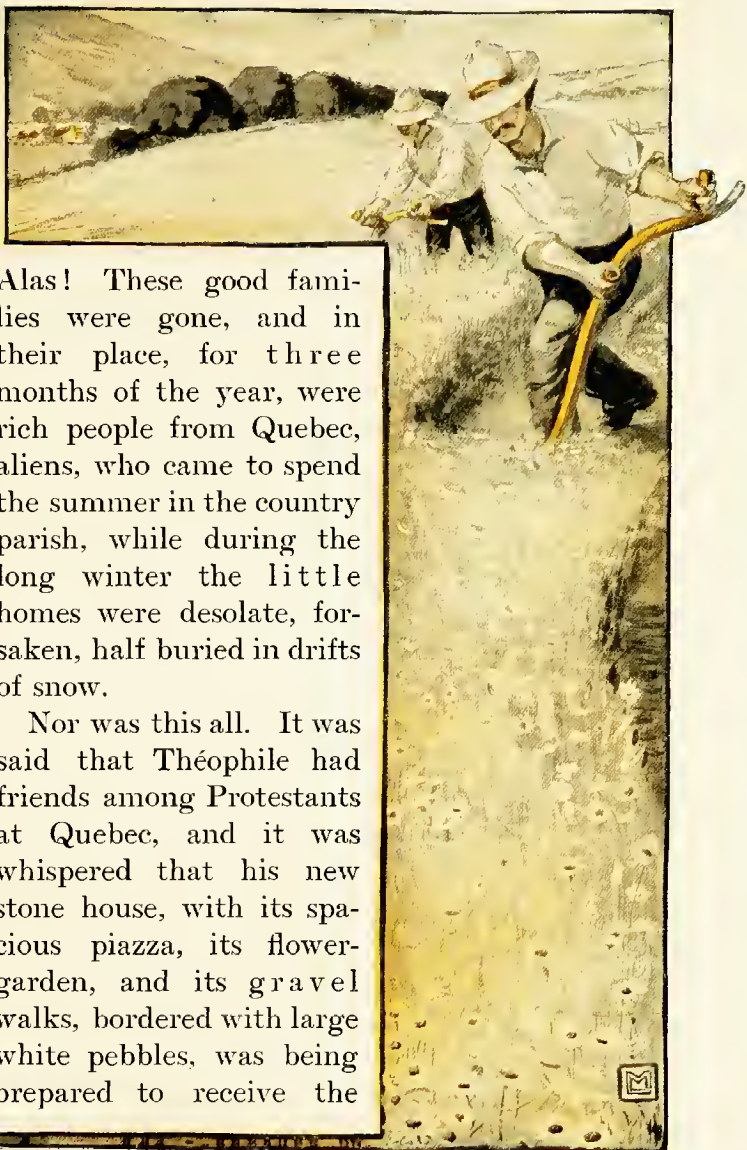
Discovering that the barn doors were too low and narrow for the great wagon with its enormous load, he tore down the venerable roof, with its graceful curving eaves, raising in its place a huge and hideous structure of



the Mansard type. French it might be, but Canadian—never!

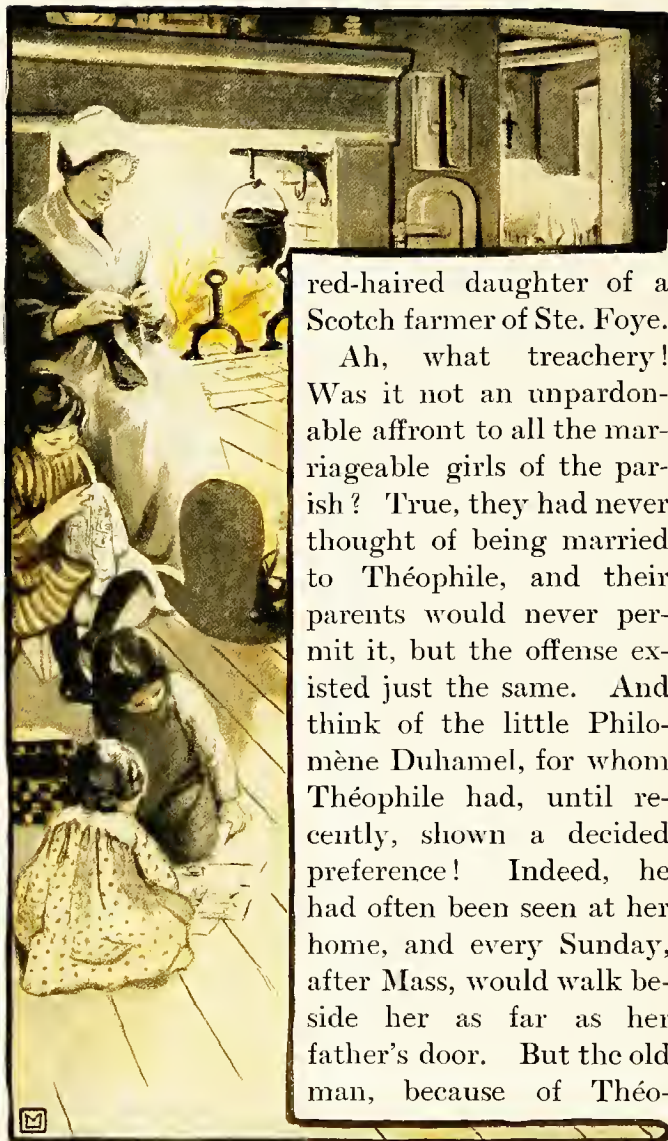
But the guardian angel himself must have shed tears as he beheld the consolidation of five beautiful farms, each two arpents wide and two miles long, extending from the river to the forest slope of the northern mountains. The old boundaries were removed and three new farms created, unlovely blocks of land, almost as broad as long, while, from the fences that were torn up, the thrifty Théophile obtained a vast quantity of firewood, more than a hundred cords, which he sold in Quebec for money enough to build a new barn on each of the more distant farms. These farms, too, he managed to sell at a price sufficient to pay the cost of all three, and this to strangers from a distant parish, who, though they might be good Catholics, had little in common with the long-established families of L'Ange Gardien.

And what of the five little farm-houses, close to the main road, where five prosperous habitant families for many years had lived?



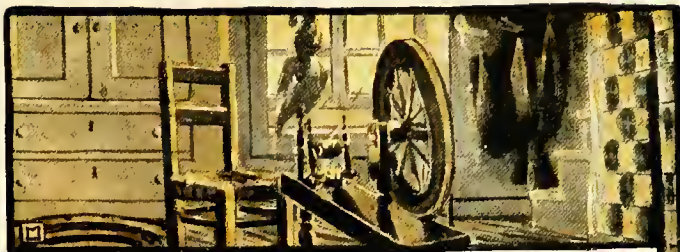
Alas! These good families were gone, and in their place, for three months of the year, were rich people from Quebec, aliens, who came to spend the summer in the country parish, while during the long winter the little homes were desolate, forsaken, half buried in drifts of snow.

Nor was this all. It was said that Théophile had friends among Protestants at Quebec, and it was whispered that his new stone house, with its spacious piazza, its flower-garden, and its gravel walks, bordered with large white pebbles, was being prepared to receive the



red-haired daughter of a Scotch farmer of Ste. Foye.

Ah, what treachery! Was it not an unpardonable affront to all the marriageable girls of the parish? True, they had never thought of being married to Théophile, and their parents would never permit it, but the offense existed just the same. And think of the little Philomène Duhamel, for whom Théophile had, until recently, shown a decided preference! Indeed, he had often been seen at her home, and every Sunday, after Mass, would walk beside her as far as her father's door. But the old man, because of Théo-

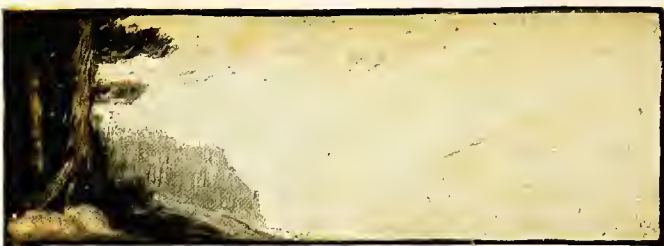


phile's evil ways, had forbidden her ever to speak to him again. Philomène had wept and Théophile had looked sad for many days. But now there was that heretic at Quebec! Théophile was cheerful and Philomène proud. They did not meet, while the stone house was finished and Théophile went often to Quebec.

2.

It was a fine morning, about the middle of July, as Théophile drove up the road toward Montmorency, Beauport, and Quebec. The sun was rising above the Island of Orleans and the gleam on the water of the North Channel was like the sparkle of diamonds, while the dew glistened on purpling fields of hay and the scent of clover blossoms filled the air. It was good to live, to breathe the fresh morning air, and to be driving rapidly toward the shining roofs and spires of the fair city of Quebec.

Yet the muttered maledictions of the neighbors followed him as he drove by. Surely,



too, the bones of the fathers must have turned in their graves as the gayly-painted buggy rattled past the quiet churchyard, where nothing more frivolous than a Norman cart had ever been seen before. But the freshness of the morning was in the heart of Théophile and the glow of sunrise in his eyes—why, then, should he concern himself with the harmless dust of former generations? So he drove on and quickly disappeared in the distance.

Toward evening he returned with less speed but more noise, dragging behind his buggy an infernal machine that made a fearful din, alarming the passers-by and causing the horses to bolt in sheer terror.

“Mon Dieu, Théophile,” said Isidore Gagnon, “what will you do with that? Is it for scaring the crows or is it a rattle for the baby? But pardon, there is not yet need for that.”

Théophile laughed, and good-naturedly described the new mowing-machine.

“Take a good look at it, Isidore. It is the first of its kind in the parish, but surely not

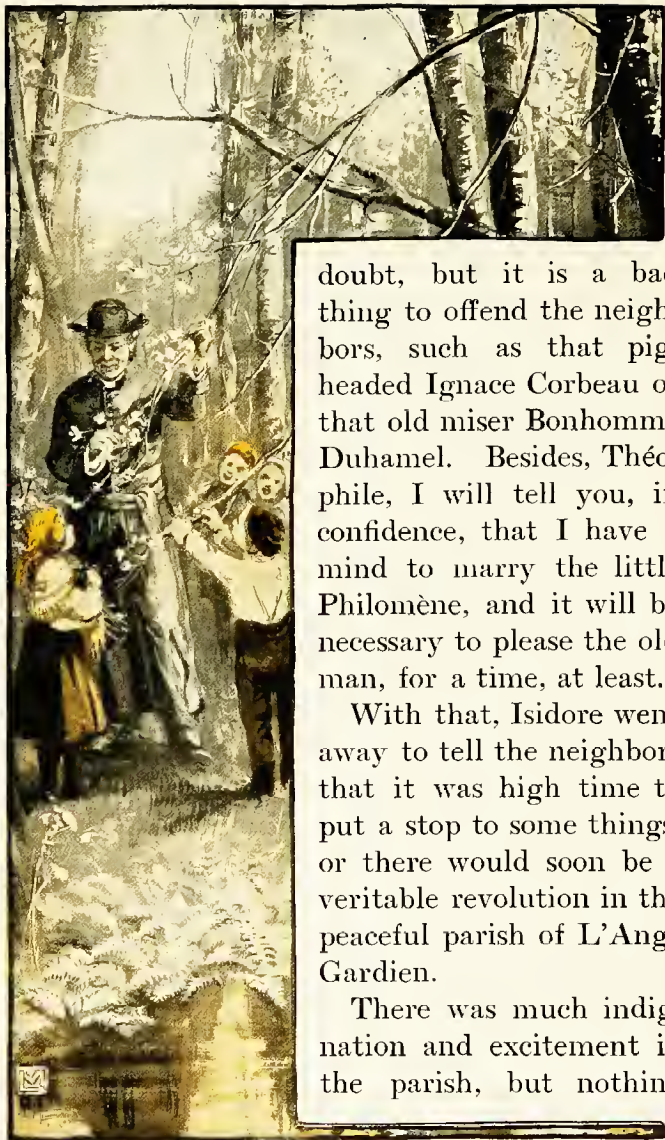


the last. We shall see changes in L'Ange Gardien. I tell you, it will do the work of ten men, and I have a rake, also, which will save much time and expense. Truly, in three days you will see me cut all my hay, and in three more it will be in my new barn. Get one of these machines, Isidore; you will pay for it in one week. If you like I will lend you mine for trial. What do you say?"

But Isidore shrugged his shoulders.

"It may be as you say, but what would the neighbors think? For me, I say it is all right. The world must move, no





doubt, but it is a bad thing to offend the neighbors, such as that pig-headed Ignace Corbeau or that old miser Bonhomme Duhamel. Besides, Théophile, I will tell you, in confidence, that I have a mind to marry the little Philomène, and it will be necessary to please the old man, for a time, at least."

With that, Isidore went away to tell the neighbors that it was high time to put a stop to some things, or there would soon be a veritable revolution in the peaceful parish of L'Ange Gardien.

There was much indignation and excitement in the parish, but nothing



would have been done had it not been for the arrival of the hay-makers on the very next day. They came with scythes, grindstones and frying-pans, from the lower parishes, from St. Tite des Caps, Les Éboulements, Baie St. Paul and places still more remote, where the harvest was several weeks later than at L'Ange Gardien. They came in bands of ten and twenty, singing as they trooped along.

"Ah, good morning, M'sieu' Beaurepaire," said the leader of the first contingent; "you remember me, do you not? Damase Trembly from Malbaie there below. I worked for you last year, did I not? Glad to cut your hay this year also, if it please you."

Damase grinned as he thought of thirty good dollars he had earned in less than two weeks, hoping once more to make as good a bargain for himself and his associates.

"Very sorry, Damase," said Théophile, "but I have a machine that will do all the work I need, with the help of myself and the regular hands. But you will find plenty of work



farther on. Bonhomme Duhamel has a large crop this year. So have all the rest."

But Damase was not content, and passed on grumbling about "damnable inventions" that took the bread out of the poor man's mouth and out of the mouth of his wife and children. Later comers were even less pleased and went so far as to threaten the "cursed heretic."

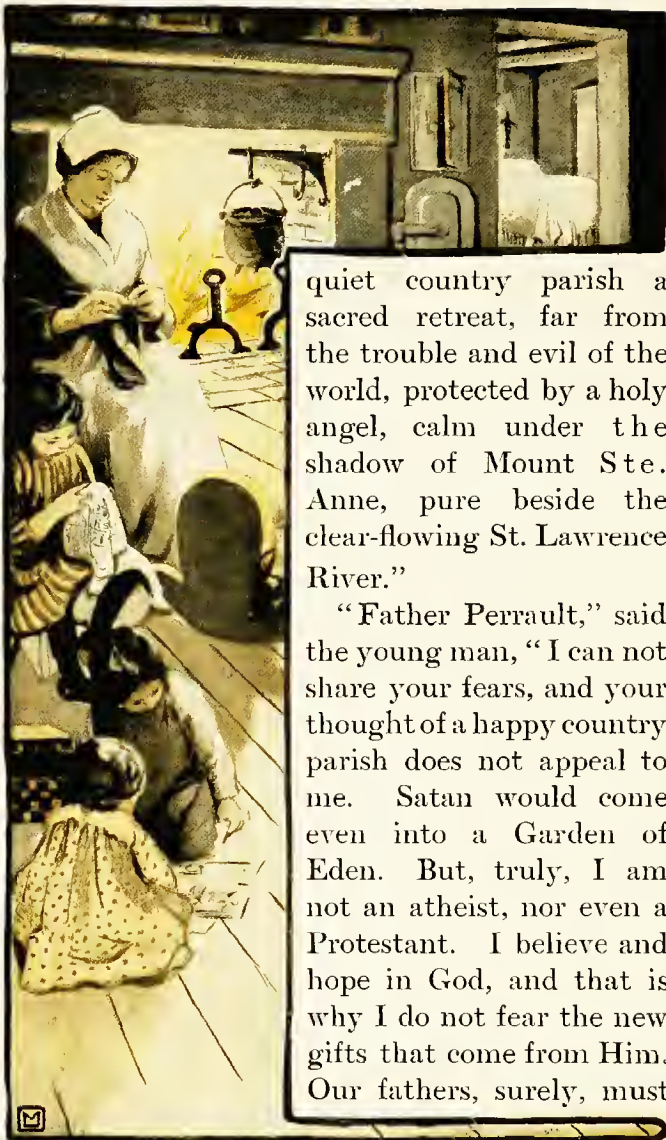
But the Canadian habitant, though sufficiently courageous, is just and peace-loving, preferring methods of conciliation to the fury and violence of open war. Therefore it was not a mob breathing vengeance that came after sunset to the house of Théophile Beaurepaire, but a simple deputation of three persons, consisting of the respected curé, M. Perrault, the influential habitant, Bonhomme Duhamel, and the leader of the hay-makers, Damase Trembly.

"My son," said the curé, "we are here to ask you, on behalf of your friends and neighbors, to refrain from using the new machine which you have brought to the parish L'Ange



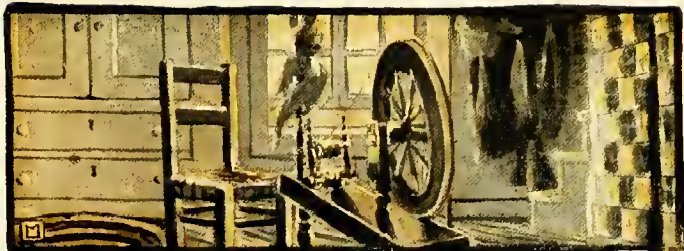
Gardien. Believe me, it is not so much the machine itself that I fear as the spirit of change that animates you and bids you depart from the ancient ways. It is with profound sorrow that I have seen you abandon, little by little, the hallowed usages of many generations, until you are ready, it would seem, to trample upon everything that your fathers have held dear, perhaps even the blessed religion itself, the Holy Church, the Sacred Heart of Christ. Return, my son, to the beaten path, trod by the feet of many generations. Unite with us and let us make this





quiet country parish a sacred retreat, far from the trouble and evil of the world, protected by a holy angel, calm under the shadow of Mount Ste. Anne, pure beside the clear-flowing St. Lawrence River."

"Father Perrault," said the young man, "I can not share your fears, and your thought of a happy country parish does not appeal to me. Satan would come even into a Garden of Eden. But, truly, I am not an atheist, nor even a Protestant. I believe and hope in God, and that is why I do not fear the new gifts that come from Him. Our fathers, surely, must



have desired a change, or they would never have come to L'Ange Gardien."

"You talk nonsense, Théophile," broke in Bonhomme Duhamel. "Our ancestors, it is true, came to L'Ange Gardien, but they brought with them customs old as the hills, and it is for us to preserve them while we live. Ah, how I remember the good old times! The thought of them brings tears to the eyes. Then were cherished the ancient solid virtues: reverence for the Church, respect for the priest, obedience to the seigneur, love for the neighbor, no discontent, no unrest, all calm, peaceful, like the river at high tide. Théophile, we want no changes in L'Ange Gardien. As our fathers have done, so will we do and our children forever. Besides, my friend, with these new inventions you are bringing ruin upon yourself and all these poor laborers who have come so far expecting work."

"That's just it," said Damase Trembly, the third member of the deputation. "Here I



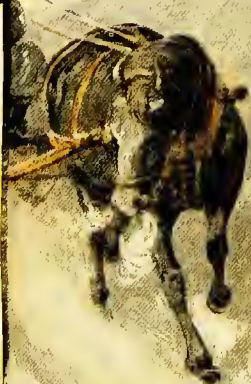
have come all the way from Malbaie, seventy miles over the hills. Ah, what hills! And there are my wife and the children, six of them, all little, not able to work. But they can eat. Mon Dieu, M'sieu' Beaurepaire, but you should see them eat—potatoes, bread, soup, fish, it is astonishing! Also they must have clothes, not in summer, perhaps, but when the cold weather comes it is absolutely necessary. They will be looking for me when the haying is over and when they see me coming along the road they will run to meet me. But what shall I say to them when I come with empty hands—no money, no warm clothes, nothing to eat? Ah! M'sieu' Beaurepaire, you will think of us. You will not use that machine. You will give work to ten, fifteen good habitants, and they will bless you while they live. They will also pray for you, they and their families. Think of it, M'sieu' Beaurepaire, the prayers of so many poor people, they will be good for you."

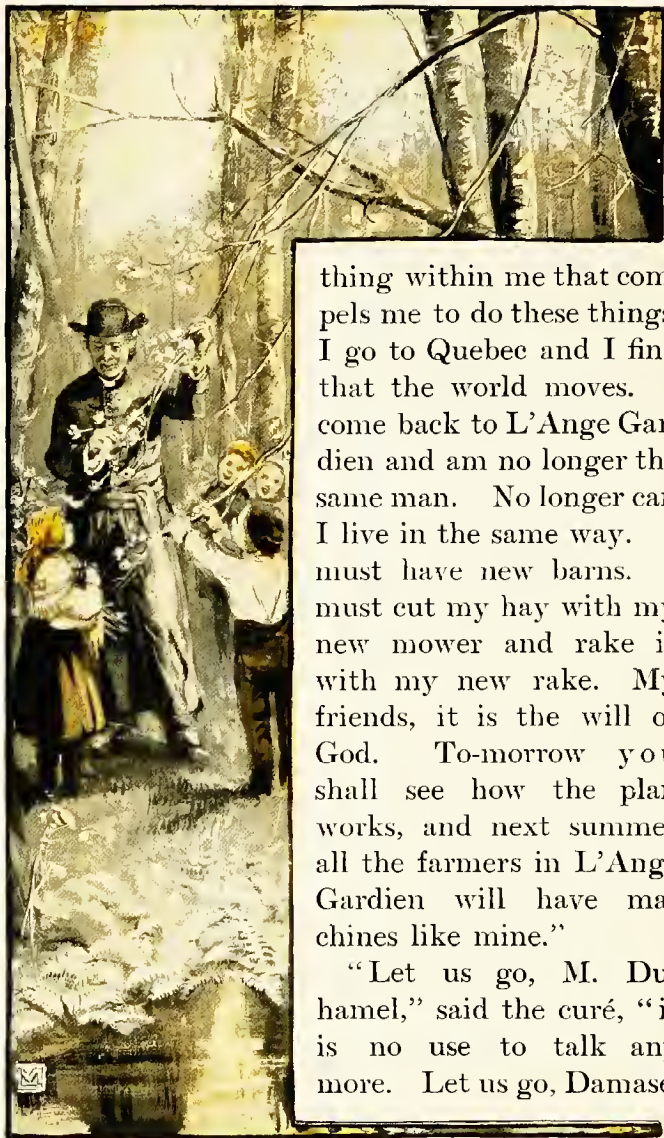
"It is true, Damase," said Théophile, rising



as he spoke, "but the workmen who made the mowing-machine and the rake, shall I not have the benefit of their prayers? Besides, if I save my money I will spend it in building a new barn or a sawmill, and there will be other people who will bless me for that. Also yourself, Damase, if you will leave your little stony farm at Malbaie and come to L'Ange Gardien, you shall work for me all the year. I will give you a house and good wages, and you shall see that farming by the new method is good for everybody.

"It is not only this, my good friends, but some-





thing within me that compels me to do these things. I go to Quebec and I find that the world moves. I come back to L'Ange Gardien and am no longer the same man. No longer can I live in the same way. I must have new barns. I must cut my hay with my new mower and rake it with my new rake. My friends, it is the will of God. To-morrow you shall see how the plan works, and next summer all the farmers in L'Ange Gardien will have machines like mine."

"Let us go, M. Duhamel," said the curé, "it is no use to talk any more. Let us go, Damase."



Good-bye, Théophile, I am sorry that you can not see as we do. Perhaps some day you may change your mind."

So the curé and the laborer went away, but Bonhomme Duhamel remained behind. He had something more to say, some faint hope that all would yet be well.

"Théophile," he said, when they were alone, "I have always thought well of you. I was a friend to your father and I have always thought of you as a son. Always have I expected you to return to the ways of your fathers. If there be anything I can do to induce you to do this, I shall be very glad. Théophile, my son, I have had ambitions for you. My daughter, too, I am sure that she does not dislike you. Who can tell but that we might arrange? You have spoken of it before, but I would not listen. Now, for the good of the parish, for my own sake, I ask you to consider. We shall yet be happy and I shall live in peace in my old age."

"M. Duhamel," said Théophile, looking

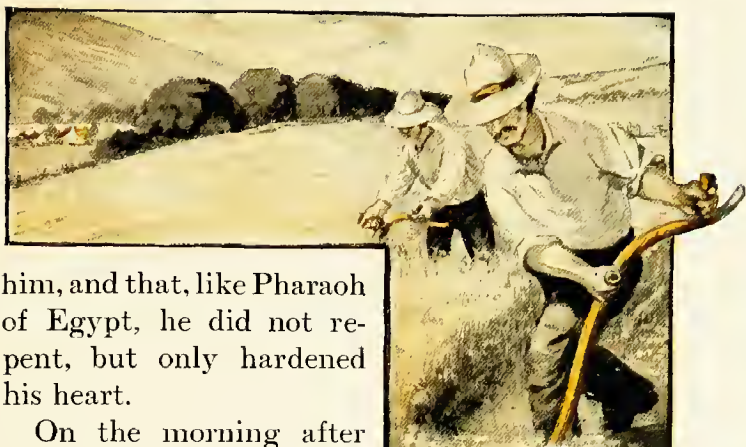


very serious, "it is true that I have wished to marry Philomène, and it is still the desire of my heart. But would she be glad to marry one who had given up the ambition of youth and the set purpose of manhood for the sake of a life of ease and stupid content? M. Duhamel, I will not believe it. If Philomène would do this she is not what I think and I will not marry her. But if she thinks with me I will carry out my plan of life and marry Philomène as well, in spite of everybody."

"Théophile," said the old man, "you have great courage, but I think you are making a sad mistake. If you find it to be so, remember what I have said."

3.

From this moment ill luck seemed to fall upon Théophile and everything that he did. The neighbors agreed that he had exhausted the patience of the good God and provoked the vengeance of heaven. Perhaps it was not so, but it is certain that misfortune followed

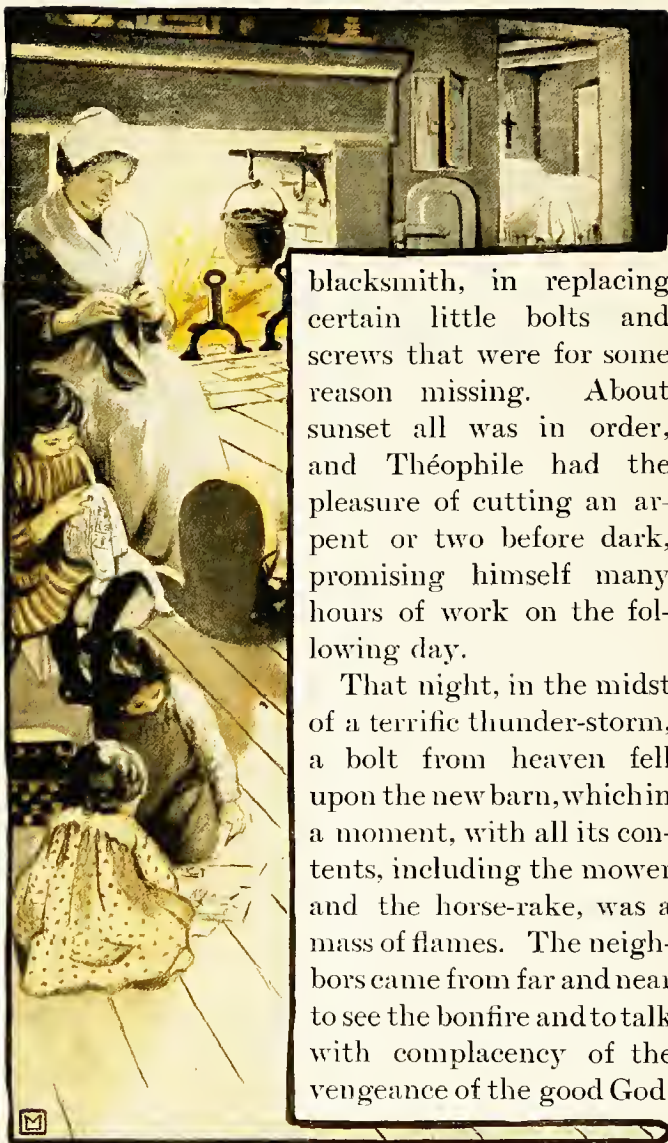


him, and that, like Pharaoh of Egypt, he did not repent, but only hardened his heart.

On the morning after the visit of the deputation, Théophile began to mow his hay with the new machine. Scarcely had he driven twice around the field when the teeth were broken against a jagged rock. It was necessary to send to Quebec for another set, so that nothing could be done that day.

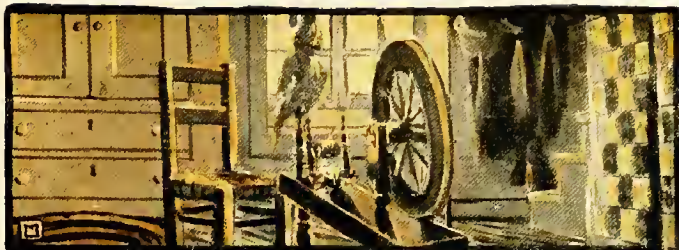
On the following morning the machine was started again, but presently it ceased to move, and Théophile was obliged to spend most of the day, with the aid of the parish





blacksmith, in replacing certain little bolts and screws that were for some reason missing. About sunset all was in order, and Théophile had the pleasure of cutting an arpent or two before dark, promising himself many hours of work on the following day.

That night, in the midst of a terrific thunder-storm, a bolt from heaven fell upon the new barn, which in a moment, with all its contents, including the mower and the horse-rake, was a mass of flames. The neighbors came from far and near to see the bonfire and to talk with complacency of the vengeance of the good God.

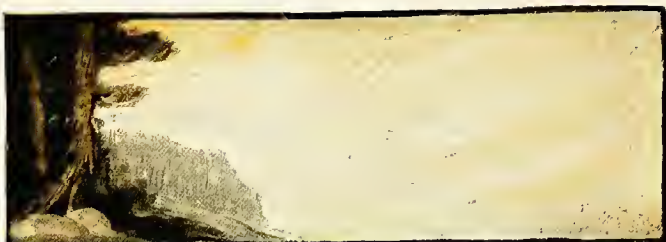


But Théophile was not yet subdued, for he sent immediately to Quebec for new machines, and it was not until he found that there were no more for sale that he determined to give up the struggle for that year. With a smile on his face he approached Damase Trembly.

“Damase,” he said, “I am beaten for this time. Will you be so kind as to cut my hay as you did last year?”

“With pleasure, M’sieu’ Beaurepaire, and I am sorry, also, that you have had such bad luck.”

So Damase, with ten assistants, went to work at once, cutting with scythes, raking with long hand rakes, and binding into bundles in the time-honored way. Soon Théophile’s hay was as far advanced as any of his neighbors’, and, if all had gone well, his losses would have been made good by the profits of that one summer. The neighbors, too, had the finest hay that had ever been seen in L’Ange Gardien, so that they had it in their



heart to forgive Théophile, and to rejoice at the prodigal's return.

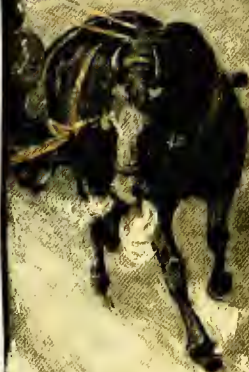
But now occurred a calamity involving the whole parish, a disaster such as had not been known within the memory of man. Upon the fragrant heaps of hay, dry and ready for binding, there fell a drenching rain, rendering it necessary to spread out over the fields all that had been so laboriously gathered, that it might dry again and again be made ready for bundling. No sooner was this done than all the work was spoiled by another day of cold and dismal rain. It is hard to believe, but nevertheless true, that, in spite of the prayers of Father Perrault, the same evil succession continued for more than six weeks, until summer was gone and the good hay was mildewed and rotten on the ground.

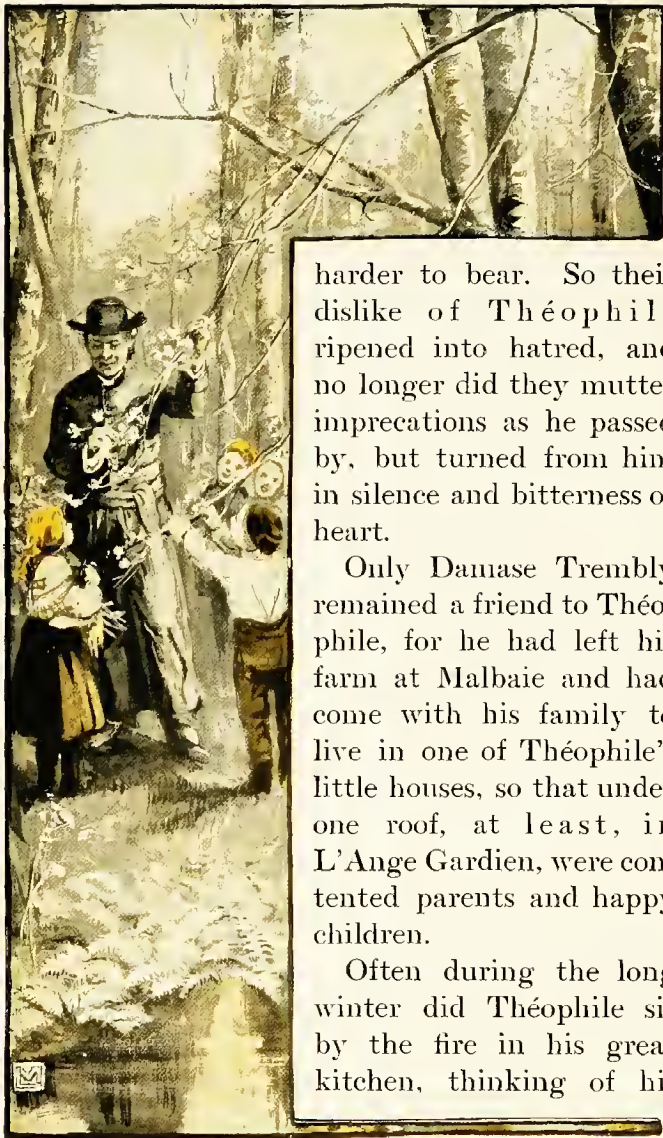
The disappointed haymakers returned to the poverty of their neglected farms, while the discouraged habitants of L'Ange Gardien remained to struggle through the long winter,



striving, by means of minute economies, to avoid touching the little hoards laid up for a rainy day.

Théophile suffered with the rest, but he was not slow to point out that several farmers of Beauport, by use of the new machines, had saved nearly all their hay before the rains began. This was a fact that the neighbors could not deny, but it was not pleasant to think of it, and Théophile was unkind to remind them of it at such a time. To have lost perhaps five hundred dollars was bad enough, but to be told that an expenditure of fifty dollars might have saved it all was even





harder to bear. So their dislike of Théophile ripened into hatred, and no longer did they mutter imprecations as he passed by, but turned from him in silence and bitterness of heart.

Only Damase Trembly remained a friend to Théophile, for he had left his farm at Malbaie and had come with his family to live in one of Théophile's little houses, so that under one roof, at least, in L'Ange Gardien, were contented parents and happy children.

Often during the long winter did Théophile sit by the fire in his great kitchen, thinking of his



failures in the past and dreaming of the success which would surely be his in the coming summer. Always he thought of the little Philomène. At one time her rogueish face smiled at him from the rising flames; at another her graceful form, shadowy yet irresistible, was at his side, only to melt away into thin air as he reached out to touch her hand. It was a consolation to think that a real, bright-eyed Philomène was not so far away, and that, perhaps, before another winter, she would be with him, his dear companion and friend for all time to come.

But never did Théophile visit the home of Philomène, and not once did she give him the slightest encouragement. Even when they met on the public road she would have passed without a sign of recognition, but that Théophile always said, "Good day, Philomène," in a loud and cheerful voice, so that Philomène could not avoid returning the greeting, as politely as possible, with the feeling that a young man of such agreeable



manners could not be so very wicked after all.

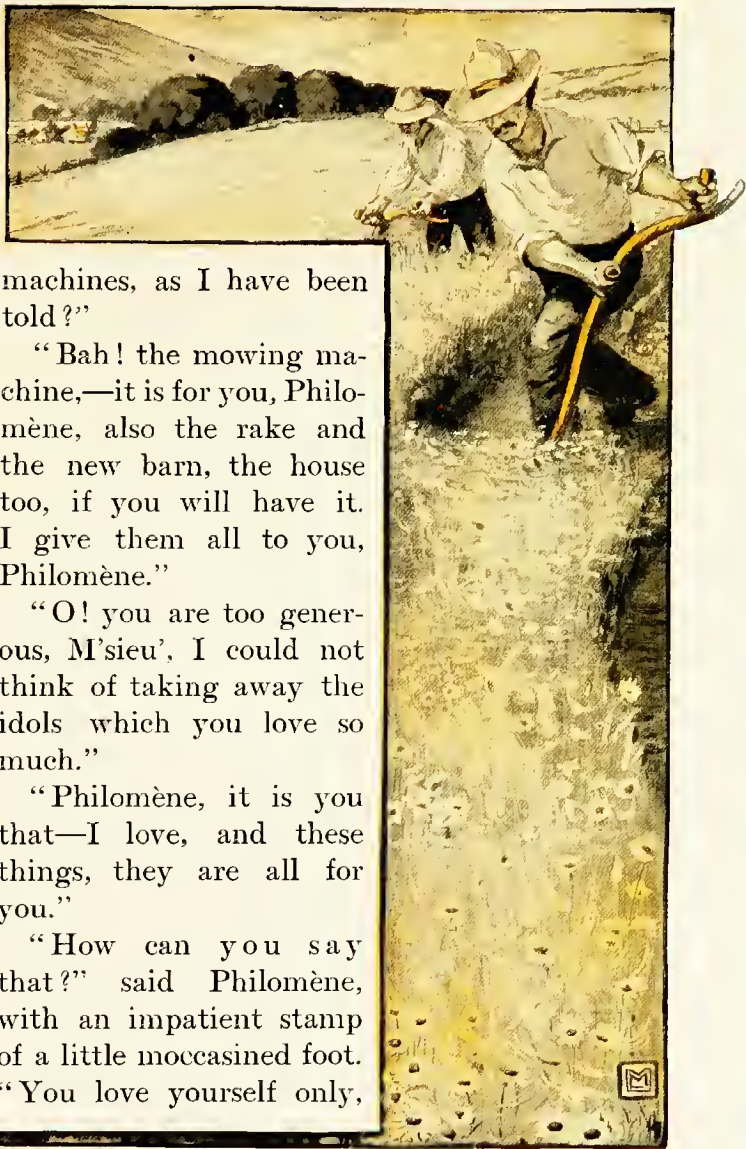
On a certain bright winter's day it seemed impossible to pass by in this unfriendly way. The sky was blue and deep blue were the shadows of the maples on the white snow, while from the heart of every snow-crystal there shone a beam of sunlight and reflected love. The beaten road creaked under foot, and the frosty air caused the blood to tingle, the cheeks to glow, and the eyes to shine with the joy of living.

"What a fine day, Philomène!" said the young man, as they met at the corner of the road. "It is good to live, is it not?"

"Truly it is, M'sieu' Beaurepaire," said Philomène, pausing a moment as she spoke.

"Mon Dieu, Philomène! how beautiful you are! And those furs! It is not in Quebec that one sees the like."

"You flatter me, M'sieu'," said Philomène, a gleam of mischief in her eyes, "is it possible that you do not always think of mowing-



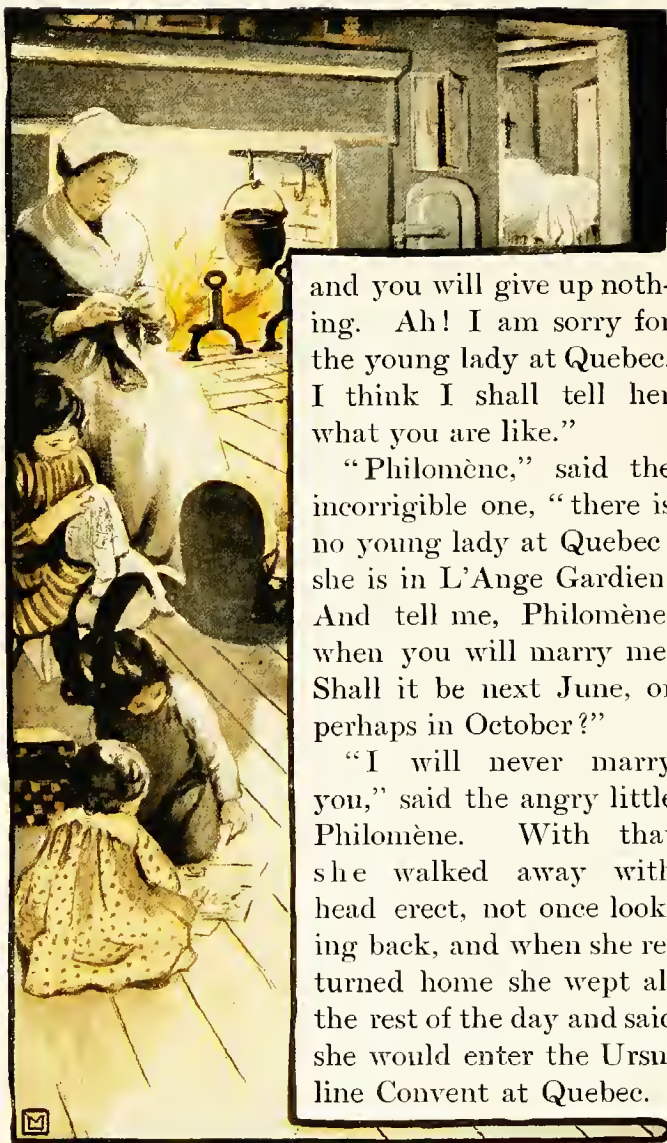
machines, as I have been told?"

"Bah! the mowing machine,—it is for you, Philomène, also the rake and the new barn, the house too, if you will have it. I give them all to you, Philomène."

"O! you are too generous, M'sieu', I could not think of taking away the idols which you love so much."

"Philomène, it is you that—I love, and these things, they are all for you."

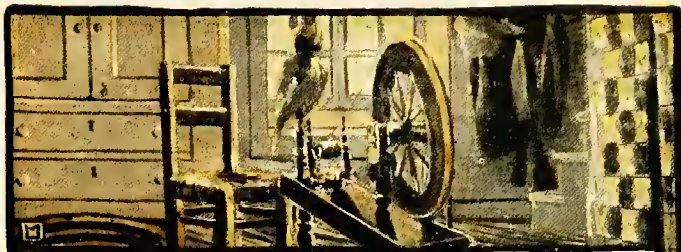
"How can you say that?" said Philomène, with an impatient stamp of a little moccasined foot. "You love yourself only,



and you will give up nothing. Ah! I am sorry for the young lady at Quebec. I think I shall tell her what you are like."

"Philomène," said the incorrigible one, "there is no young lady at Quebec; she is in L'Ange Gardien. And tell me, Philomène, when you will marry me. Shall it be next June, or perhaps in October?"

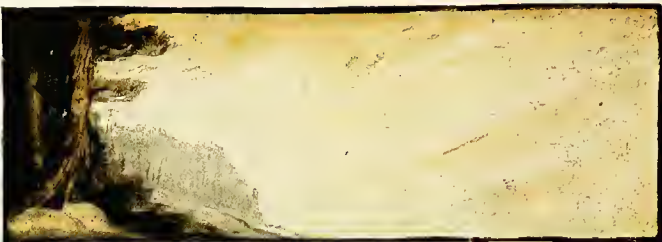
"I will never marry you," said the angry little Philomène. With that she walked away with head erect, not once looking back, and when she returned home she wept all the rest of the day and said she would enter the Ursuline Convent at Quebec.



In a few days, however, Philomène was as bright and smiling as ever. Isidore Gagnon came often to the house, and it was reported that he would marry the daughter of Bonhomme Duhamel in the early autumn.

This was the last and greatest of Théophile's misfortunes and he came very near to losing heart. But every day he went about his daily work, and every evening he sat alone by the fire, smoking his pipe and thinking of what might have been, though not without a hope of what might yet be, when the day of adversity should pass away.

Thus the winter passed, and spring blossomed into summer, until the harvest season came again and once more the purpling fields awaited the coming of the haymakers. But Théophile did not wait, and on a fine morning in July the rattle of his mowing-machine filled the air. All the birds and beasts of the farm ceased their morning songs, pausing to listen to the unfamiliar discord. Then the cheerful orchestra began again, louder than



ever, as if to welcome the new member into the happy, noisy country family.

All day Théophile drove up and down the broad field, until the tasseled hay no longer waved in the breeze, but lay prostrate in fragrant rows, soon to dry in the sun, then to be raked into heaps, piled upon the great wagons and stored away in the spacious barns. In the course of ten days the entire crop of nearly two hundred tons, or, in the language of the habitant, about twenty-five thousand bundles, was saved in fine condition. At the high prices then current it was a fortune for Théophile. The success for which he had worked and waited was his at last.

4.

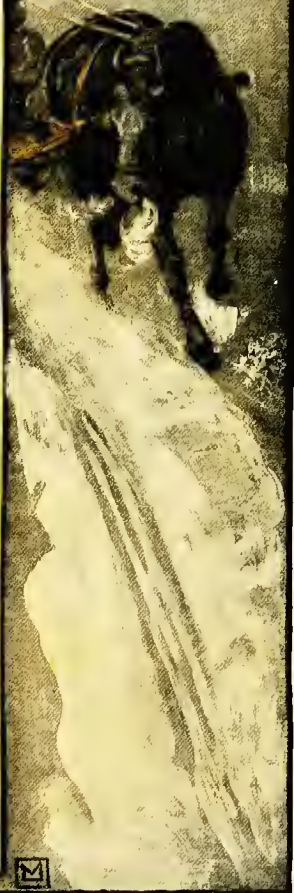
One evening after sunset, Théophile sat on his doorstep watching the play of lightning on the gathering clouds. The coming storm he had no reason to fear. It might, perhaps, do a little damage to his neighbors' hay, but that was no fault of his. By-and-by they

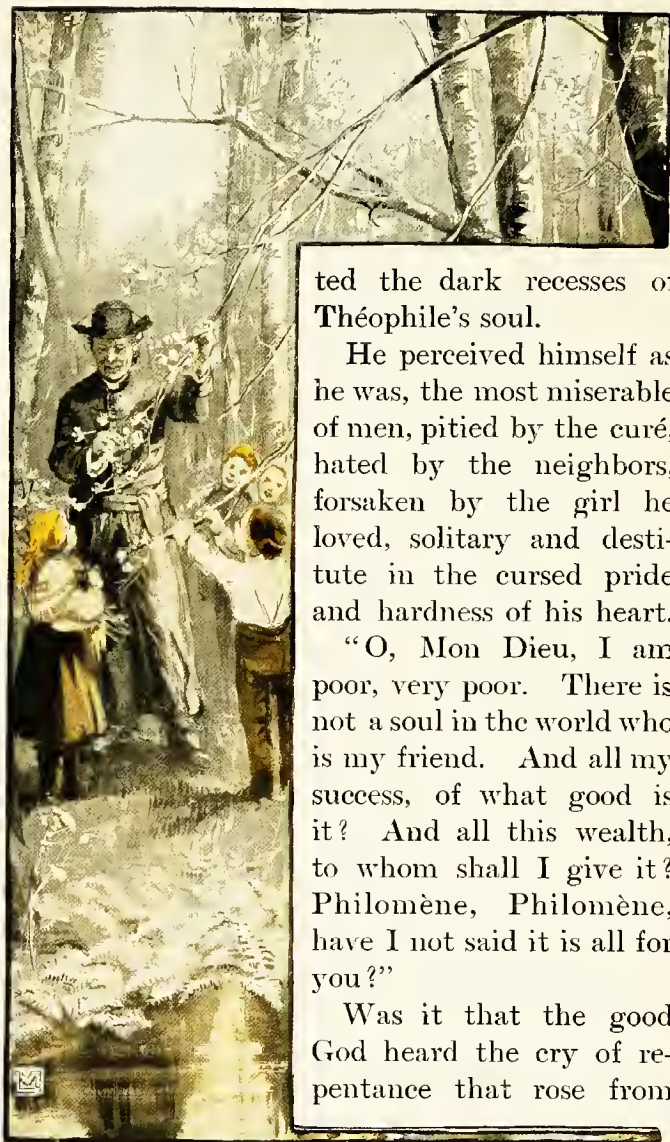


would come to his way of thinking and in the end would lose nothing. Meanwhile it was a satisfaction to see them suffer a little for their stupidity.

As for himself, Théophile rejoiced to think of his well-filled barns. Twenty-five thousand bundles! It was magnificent! Then there was the farm of nearly two hundred arpents, the horses and cattle, the money in the bank, the new stone house. "Truly," he thought, "I am a very happy man, since I possess all this wealth. Is it not so?"

At this moment a flash, as of lightning, illumina-





ted the dark recesses of Théophile's soul.

He perceived himself as he was, the most miserable of men, pitied by the curé, hated by the neighbors, forsaken by the girl he loved, solitary and destitute in the cursed pride and hardness of his heart.

"O, Mon Dieu, I am poor, very poor. There is not a soul in the world who is my friend. And all my success, of what good is it? And all this wealth, to whom shall I give it? Philomène, Philomène, have I not said it is all for you?"

Was it that the good God heard the cry of repentance that rose from



the heart of Théophile, or was it by accident that the answer came? Who can tell? But it is certain that gentle hands pressed the latch of the garden gate, and soft footsteps advanced along the gravel walk, until Théophile knew that his good angel stood by his side in the hour of darkness. In a low voice he said:

“Is it you, Philomène? Is it really you?”

“Yes, M’sieu’ Beaurepaire, it is I, and I have something to tell you.”

“Tell me that you love me, Philomène. Say that you will marry me in October, if it please God.”

“But no, Théophile, it is about Isidore that I wish to speak. He is a wicked man, and it was he who spoiled your machine last summer. It was he, also, who set fire to your barn, and not the lightning as we supposed.”

“I know it,” said Théophile, quietly.

“You knew it and said nothing?”

“To what end, Philomène. Besides, Isidore was once my friend.”

“Your friend, Théophile! He is your worst



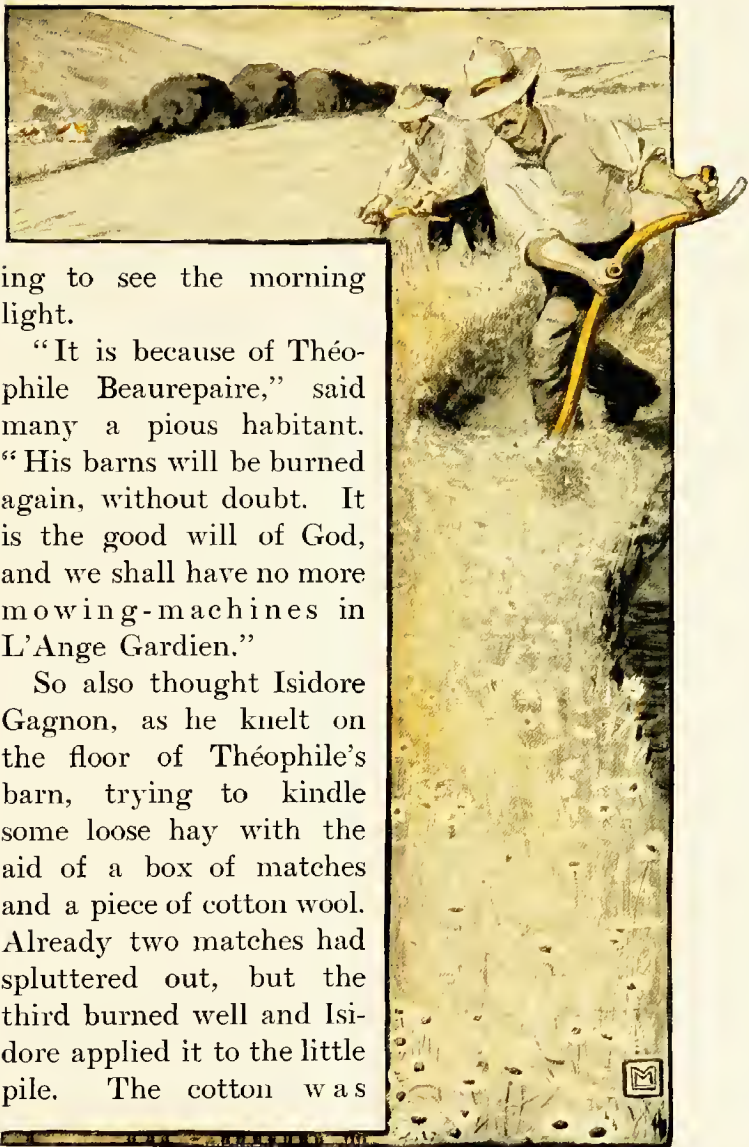
enemy, and mine too. He is very angry with me, also, for a certain reason. But that is not all. He will come again to-night, as soon as the storm begins. I am sure of it. You will watch, will you not, Théophile?"

"Yes dear," said Théophile, as he kissed her, "and you are a brave girl to come so far on such a night as this."

"O no, Théophile, it was nothing. And now I must go. Do not come with me. My father is back there by the gate. Good-bye, Théophile."

"Good-bye, dearest," said Théophile, as he kissed her, without protest, for the second time. "And it will be in October after all, will it not?"

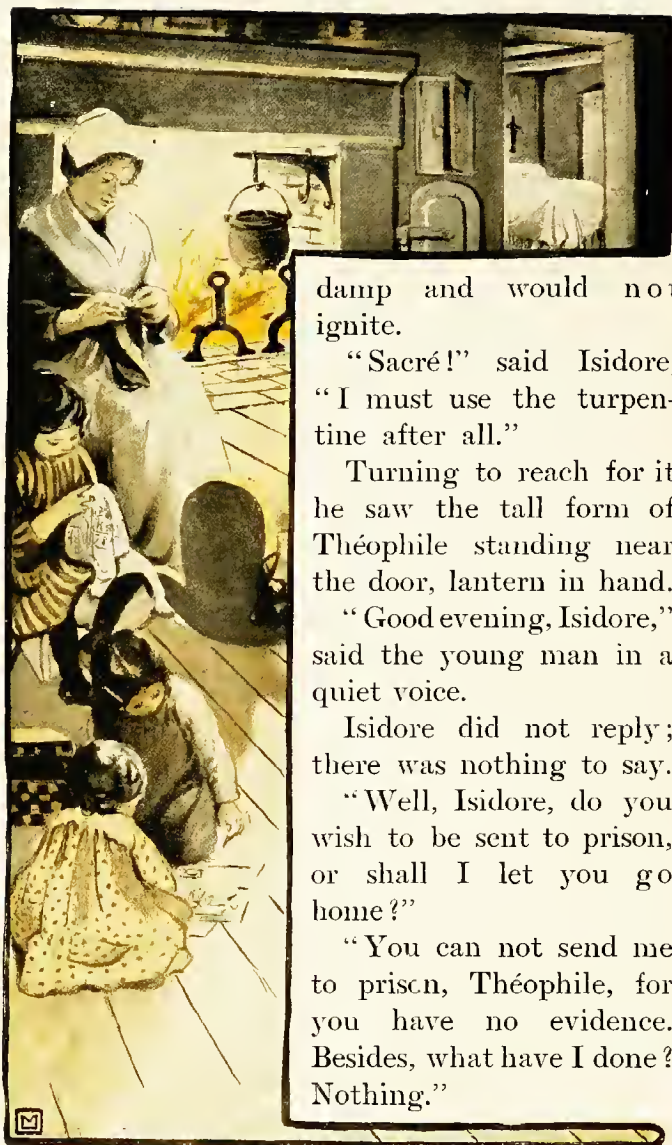
About midnight the storm broke, and from the black clouds overhanging L'Ange Gardien there fell great bolts of fire, instantly followed by crashing thunder and heavy drops of rain. People rose from their beds in fear and crossed themselves repeatedly and muttered infinite prayers, scarcely hop-



ing to see the morning light.

“It is because of Théophile Beaurepaire,” said many a pious habitant. “His barns will be burned again, without doubt. It is the good will of God, and we shall have no more mowing-machines in L’Ange Gardien.”

So also thought Isidore Gagnon, as he knelt on the floor of Théophile’s barn, trying to kindle some loose hay with the aid of a box of matches and a piece of cotton wool. Already two matches had spluttered out, but the third burned well and Isidore applied it to the little pile. The cotton was



damp and would not ignite.

“Sacré!” said Isidore, “I must use the turpentine after all.”

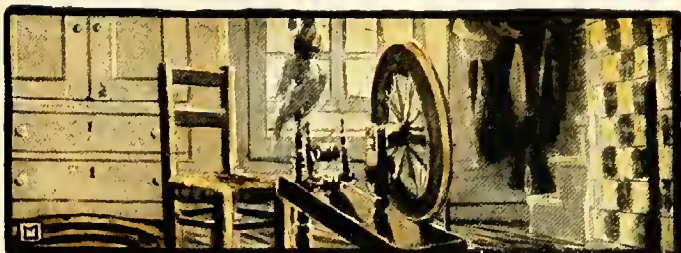
Turning to reach for it he saw the tall form of Théophile standing near the door, lantern in hand.

“Good evening, Isidore,” said the young man in a quiet voice.

Isidore did not reply; there was nothing to say.

“Well, Isidore, do you wish to be sent to prison, or shall I let you go home?”

“You can not send me to prison, Théophile, for you have no evidence. Besides, what have I done? Nothing.”



“Nothing, Isidore? Not to-night, perhaps, but what of last year? Damase Trembly remembers something, also M. Duhamel and even Philomène. The evidence is sufficient, I think.”

At the mention of Philomène’s name Isidore grew pale.

“It is all over, then,” he said. “It was for her sake that I did it. Do what you like with me, Théophile. Yet I was once your friend.”

“That is true, Isidore, and I can not forget it. Perhaps we shall be friends again, if God will. But you will not try to burn my barn again, Isidore?”

“Mon Dieu, no!” said Isidore, as he turned away. “I have not deserved your consideration, Théophile.”

The next morning at sunrise Bonhomme Duhamel came to see Théophile Beaurepaire.

“Théophile,” he said, “it is impossible for me to cut my hay this year. I am not so young as formerly, and I can get no

laborers. Your work is all finished. Can you not come to help me?"

"With great pleasure, M'sieu' Duhamel," said Théophile, "and shall I bring the mowing-machine?"

"As you wish, Théophile. I have been to blame. You must forgive me."

"I will come, M'sieu' Duhamel, and the horse-rake I will bring also. The small hay-cart will be better, since the barn doors are small. Will you not in time enlarge them and make use of the large wagons?"

"I will do whatever you say, Théophile. You shall have your own way in everything."

"And Philomène?" pursued the inexorable Théophile.—"Philomène also, my son," said the old man, embracing Théophile.—"Philomène shall drive the horse-rake, my father. It will be a fine arrangement, and there are yet many days of good weather. The hay will all be saved, without a doubt. And after that—"

"After that we will celebrate," said Bonhomme Duhamel.



V.
THE EXILE.





MADELEINE.

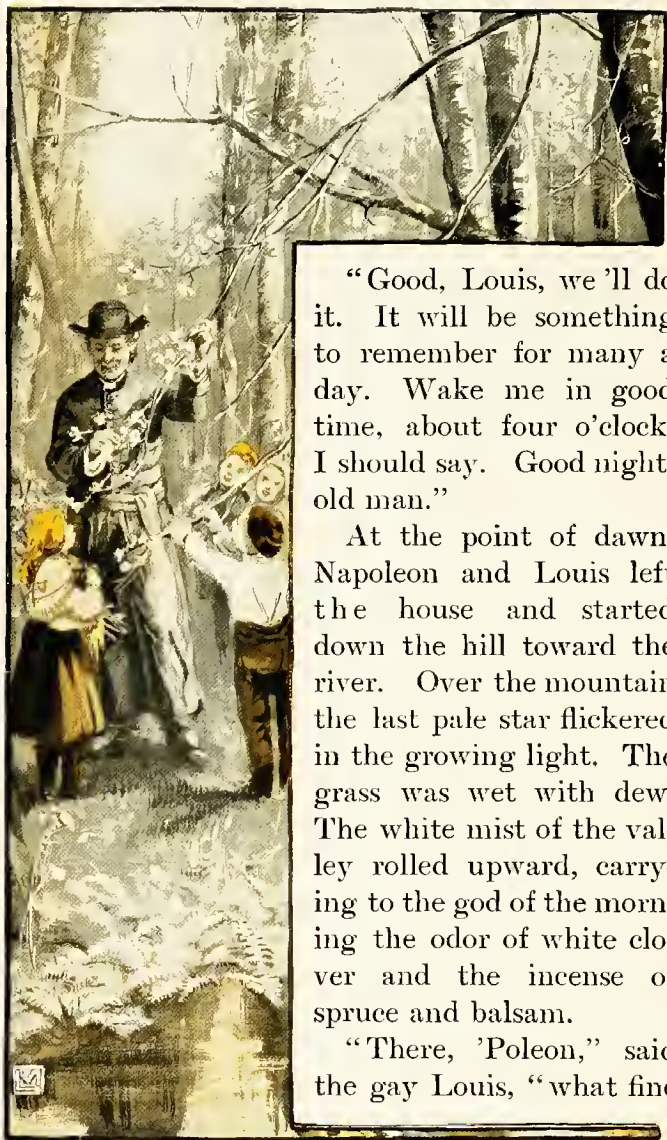


THE EXILE.

1.

“No, BROTHER LOUIS, it will not be possible to prolong my visit. Gladly would I stay with you all summer, but there are matters of business that call me back. Who knows? Another ten years will soon pass, and then, perhaps, I shall come again. But to-morrow will be the last day for the present, at least. And it will be a long day. What shall we do to pass the time?”

“Let us try the river. Since yesterday the water has fallen and there will be good fishing. We shall take some fine trout, 'Poleon.”



“Good, Louis, we ’ll do it. It will be something to remember for many a day. Wake me in good time, about four o’clock, I should say. Good night, old man.”

At the point of dawn, Napoleon and Louis left the house and started down the hill toward the river. Over the mountain the last pale star flickered in the growing light. The grass was wet with dew. The white mist of the valley rolled upward, carrying to the god of the morning the odor of white clover and the incense of spruce and balsam.

“There, ’Poleon,” said the gay Louis, “what fine



fresh air, how sweet and clear and cool! Where in all your travels have you breathed the like?"

"Bah, Louis! why speak of it? The air is good and refreshing, but you have not tasted the strong air of the plains, in comparison with which the air of Laval is moist, soft, without vigor. I who have traveled in the far West know what it is to fill the lungs with ozone as one rides chasing the buffalo and the antelope. Ah, Louis, those were days, that was air!"

Louis gave an incredulous look at his brother, but could read nothing in his sphinx-like face, and turned away with a shrug, as much as to say: "How is that possible?"

Presently, as they were crossing the long meadow below the hill, with the eager haste that only anglers know, the sky began to brighten, passing imperceptibly through all the changes of color, from pearly gray to blue and red and gold. Then, as the first rays of the sun touched the moun-

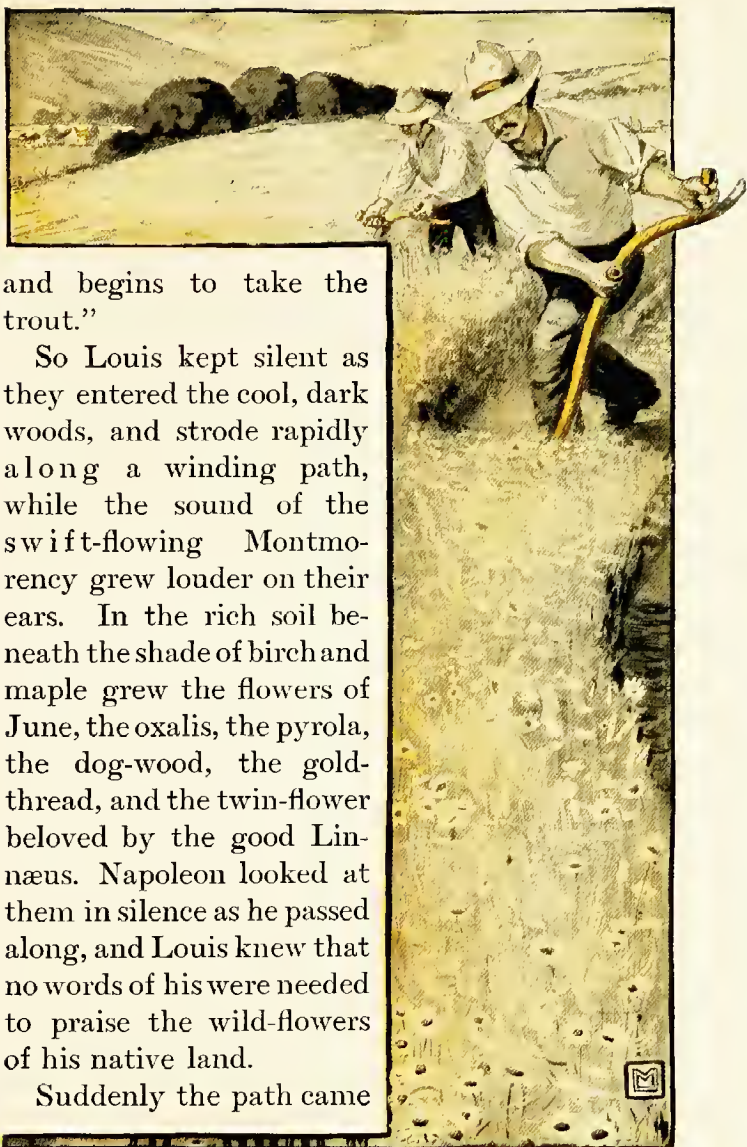


tain tops, Louis could remain silent no longer.

“Look, ’Poleon! look at those mountains as they shine in the sunlight. See how the dark-green hills wear a tuque of gold. They are the true habitants, always faithful, our good old friends. How fine they are! You have never seen mountains like these in any foreign land. Is it not so ’Poeon?”

“You are a fool, Louis, to talk like that to me who has seen the rockies. I tell you, what you call mountains are nothing but foot-hills,—I who have seen the canyon of the Colorado, five thousand feet from the river-bed to the summit of the rocks above. And those rocks, yellow and red and purple, all the colors. Mon Dieu! What folly to compare these stupid ant-hills with those temples of the gods. Louis, be silent.”

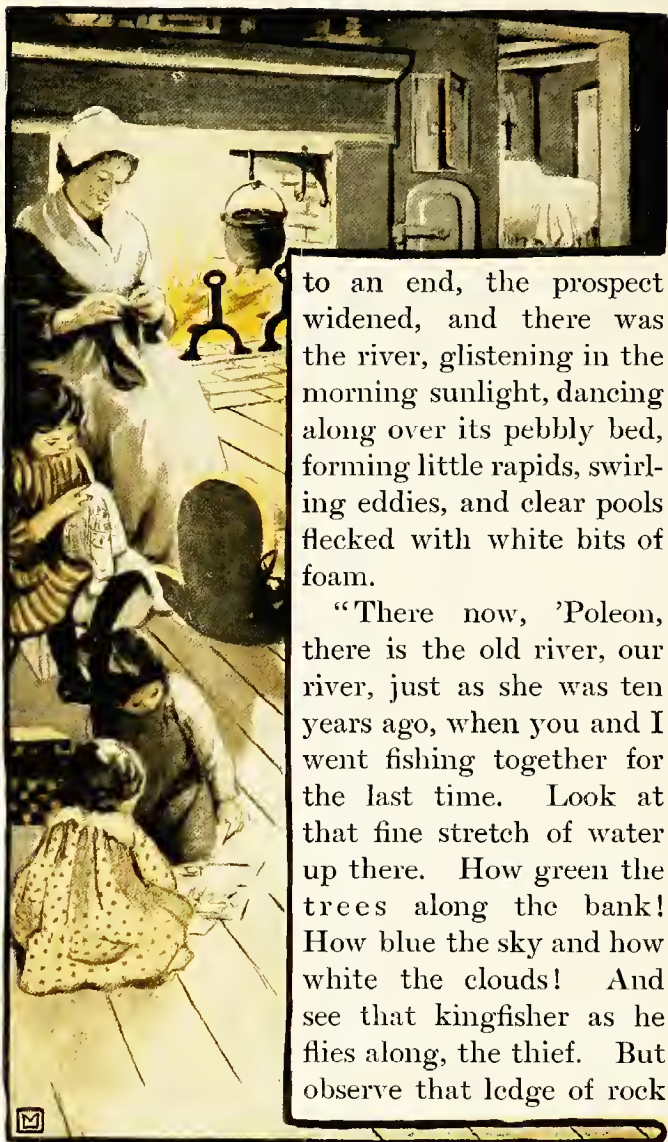
“Surely,” thought Louis, “something is the matter with Brother ’Poleon. It is not often that he talks like that. He will feel better, perhaps, when he sees the river



and begins to take the trout."

So Louis kept silent as they entered the cool, dark woods, and strode rapidly along a winding path, while the sound of the swift-flowing Montmorency grew louder on their ears. In the rich soil beneath the shade of birch and maple grew the flowers of June, the oxalis, the pyrola, the dog-wood, the gold-thread, and the twin-flower beloved by the good Linnaeus. Napoleon looked at them in silence as he passed along, and Louis knew that no words of his were needed to praise the wild-flowers of his native land.

Suddenly the path came



to an end, the prospect widened, and there was the river, glistening in the morning sunlight, dancing along over its pebbly bed, forming little rapids, swirling eddies, and clear pools flecked with white bits of foam.

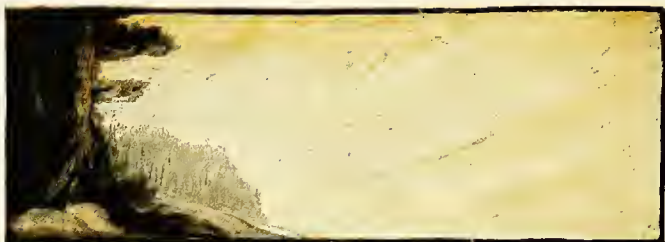
"There now, 'Poleon, there is the old river, our river, just as she was ten years ago, when you and I went fishing together for the last time. Look at that fine stretch of water up there. How green the trees along the bank! How blue the sky and how white the clouds! And see that kingfisher as he flies along, the thief. But observe that ledge of rock



there below, with the deep pool and the back-eddy. It is there that you will take a trout such as you have not seen in years. Now, 'Poleon, confess; there is nothing like that in foreign lands."

"Louis, stop your idiotic chatter. This river, I have seen it before, many a time. I know all about it. It is a pretty stream, a pleasant brook. Certainly. But, Louis, you fatigue me with your boasting. Talk about the Yankee and his blow. Mon Dieu, Louis, you also have some blow. And you talk thus to me, to me who has seen the Missouri. Ah, that was a strong river, broad, long, perhaps four thousand miles from the mountains to the sea. Yes, that was a great river. This Montmorency, it is a pretty brook, good enough in its way, not bad for Laval, good enough for the people who live in this little place. O yes, good enough for them, quite good enough. Confound this line, it's tangled! Louis, do n't make me talk. I'll not listen to you."

Thereupon Napoleon set up his rod, reeled



out his line, attached a leader, then a Coachman and a Brown Hackle, waded out into the river as far as he could go, and, after a few preliminary flourishes of rod and line, dexterously cast his flies into the swirling water at the head of the pool.

The response was sudden, and the taciturn Napoleon could not conceal his surprise and delight.

"See, Louis, he is there, the big fellow. I have him! Ah, missed! Once more. Another try."

This time, as the fly lightly touched the water, a dark form rose and sank and made away with hook and line as fast as the strong, lithe tail could move.

"There, 'Poleon, you have him, the old fellow. Not too much line! Here he comes! Take in, take in! There he goes! No fear, he is well hooked. Sapré, see him jump! Gently now. He's tired. No, off again. Back once more. He's swimming up. I see him. Caution, 'Poleon. I'll take him in my

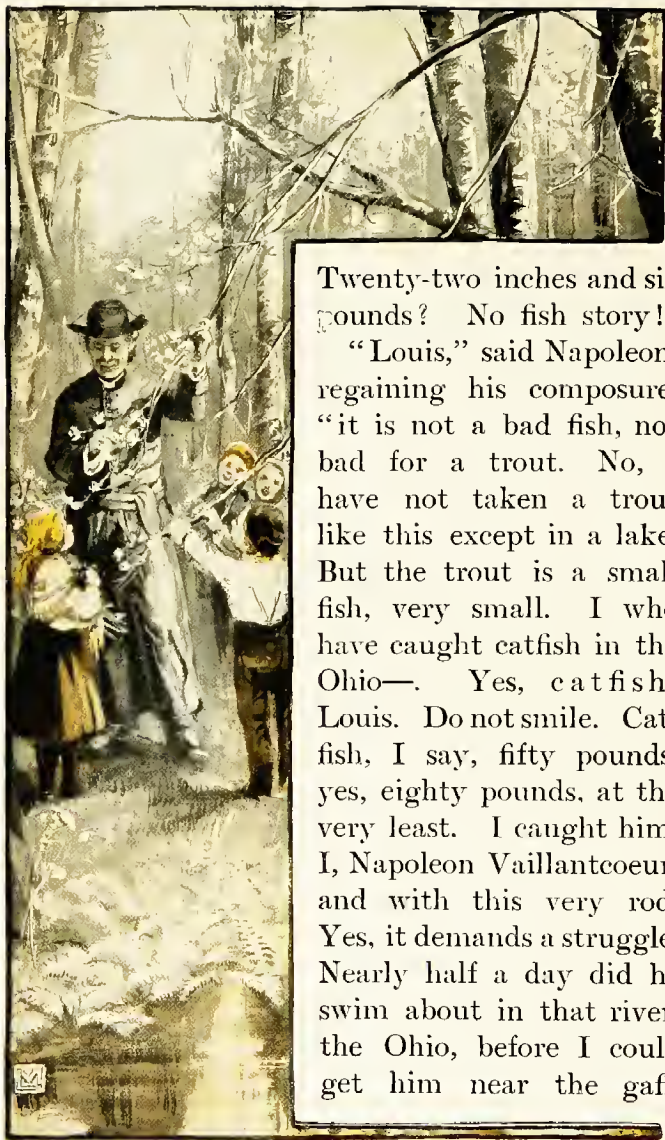


hands. Here he comes. There, my good fellow, I have you."

Louis held up the prize, gleaming, dripping, flopping his big tail, a magnificent fish, the king of the river.

"See there, 'Poleon, see there! Have you ever seen such a trout? Long? Twenty-two inches at the very least. And thick. Ah, a big fellow! Look at those spots, red, blue, yellow. And see those fins and that tail. 'Poleon, he weighs not less than six pounds. What luck! Now tell the truth, 'Poleon, have you ever before seen such a trout, such a speckled brook trout?"





Twenty-two inches and six pounds? No fish story!"

"Louis," said Napoleon, regaining his composure, "it is not a bad fish, not bad for a trout. No, I have not taken a trout like this except in a lake. But the trout is a small fish, very small. I who have caught catfish in the Ohio—. Yes, catfish, Louis. Do not smile. Catfish, I say, fifty pounds, yes, eighty pounds, at the very least. I caught him, I, Napoleon Vaillantcoeur, and with this very rod. Yes, it demands a struggle. Nearly half a day did he swim about in that river, the Ohio, before I could get him near the gaff.



Talk to me of trout. This is a good trout, but one must not begin to compare. You should have seen that catfish. Truly, that was a fish."

Louis was crushed. He had nothing more to say, and for a long time he did not speak a word. Yet gradually his spirits rose, for the day was fine, the water clear, and the hungry trout rose eagerly to the fly from every pool and every long shining riffle. For a mile or more they fished up the stream, then down again, and when, toward evening, they climbed the long hill on the way home, each bore a heavy creel filled with speckled beauties, besides the six-pounder that Louis carried on a forked willow-branch. It was the catch of the season. Louis was overjoyed, and the imperturbable Napoleon could not conceal his satisfaction at the outcome of the day's sport. It was Louis' last chance to entice his brother into some admission of the superiority of the old home.

"But, 'Poleon, Laval is not such a bad



place. One is comfortable here. One does not work too hard, and now and then one has time to enjoy life as we have done to-day. There is always enough to eat, plenty of clothes to wear, and a roof over one's head. In summer it is not too hot and in winter there is wood for the fire. There are no paupers in this parish. We are not rich, but we have good health, kind friends, a school, a church, a good priest. What more could one ask of the good God? One could be contented here, could one not?"

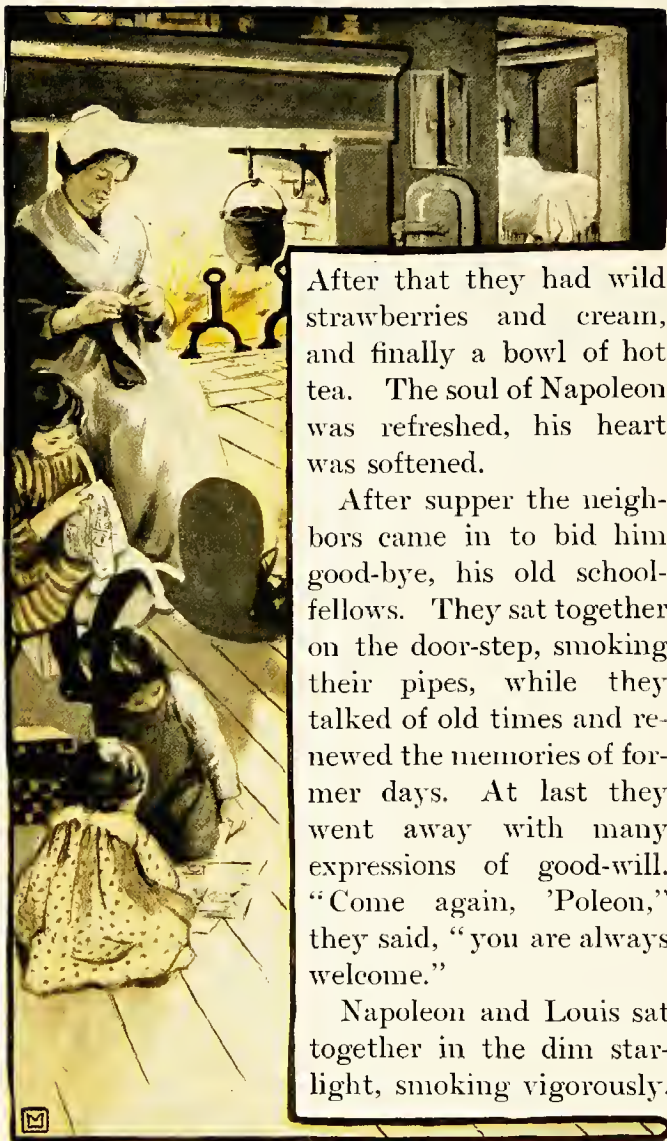
"There you go again, Louis, with your stupid talk. Ah, bah! What do you know of the world, you who have traveled no farther than Quebec? I who have seen Chicago, with its great buildings, its churches and theaters. its streets and parks, I tell you, Louis, there is nothing here, nothing. Talk of paupers, they are all paupers here, every one. Enough to eat? Enough of black bread, pea-soup, and fat pork. Too much, Louis, far too much. How glad I am to have some fresh trout for



supper! Come, Louis, come with me to-morrow morning. You have staid here long enough. Now you shall see the world. After that you may come back to Laval, if you wish. But you will not wish it. No, it will be impossible, forever. Forever! One might think of that, perhaps. Yes, it is to be considered."

Arriving at the house they changed their clothes and sat down to supper with a good appetite. A good appetite and a good meal, what could be better than that? They ate of the trout they had just caught, the smaller ones, fried with eggs, a dish for a king.

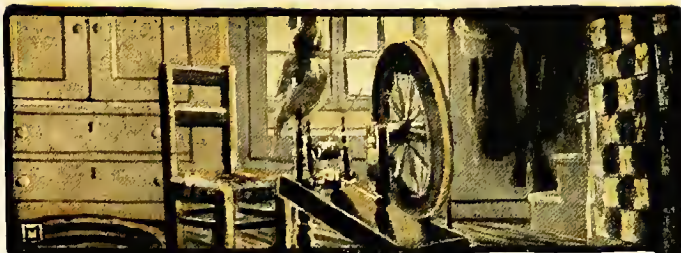




After that they had wild strawberries and cream, and finally a bowl of hot tea. The soul of Napoleon was refreshed, his heart was softened.

After supper the neighbors came in to bid him good-bye, his old school-fellows. They sat together on the door-step, smoking their pipes, while they talked of old times and renewed the memories of former days. At last they went away with many expressions of good-will. "Come again, 'Poleon," they said, "you are always welcome."

Napoleon and Louis sat together in the dim starlight, smoking vigorously.



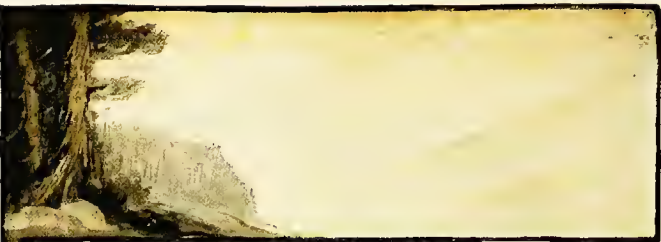
For a long time they sat thus, silent, thinking their own thoughts. At last Louis said: "Well, 'Poleon, I am going with you to-morrow morning."

"What, Louis, what is that you say? You are going to leave Laval, the river, the mountains, the church of our fathers, the little village, the friends that you love? How can you do it, Brother Louis?"

"Yes, 'Poleon, there is nothing here. I am tired of it all. There, now! Don't you remember what you said this morning? Our mountains, for example, what are they in comparison with the great Rockies?"

"The Rockies! Louis, you amuse me. If you had seen them you would not talk like that. No trees, no verdure, nothing but rough masses of rock, bare, cheerless, painful to the eye. Your mountains, Louis, they are wonderfully beautiful in comparison with those forlorn pyramids of stone. Rocky, stony, yes, they are well named."

"'Poleon, it is curious to hear you speak



thus after what you said this very day. You have surely not forgotten the opinion you had about our miserable little river and the grand, beautiful Missouri!"

"The Missouri River! Heavens! If you could see it. It is a river of mud, a mad torrent of turbulent, swirling mud. You have seen the Montmorency at the time of spring floods. Well, the Missouri is like that all the time. But the water of your river, it is a pleasure to drink it as it flows clear and cool over the great pebbles. And the rapids, the white foam, the pools, the bending trees, the shadows. Louis, it is Paradise and the river of God. Do not think that you will see the like in any foreign country. The Missouri! Sapré tonnerre!"

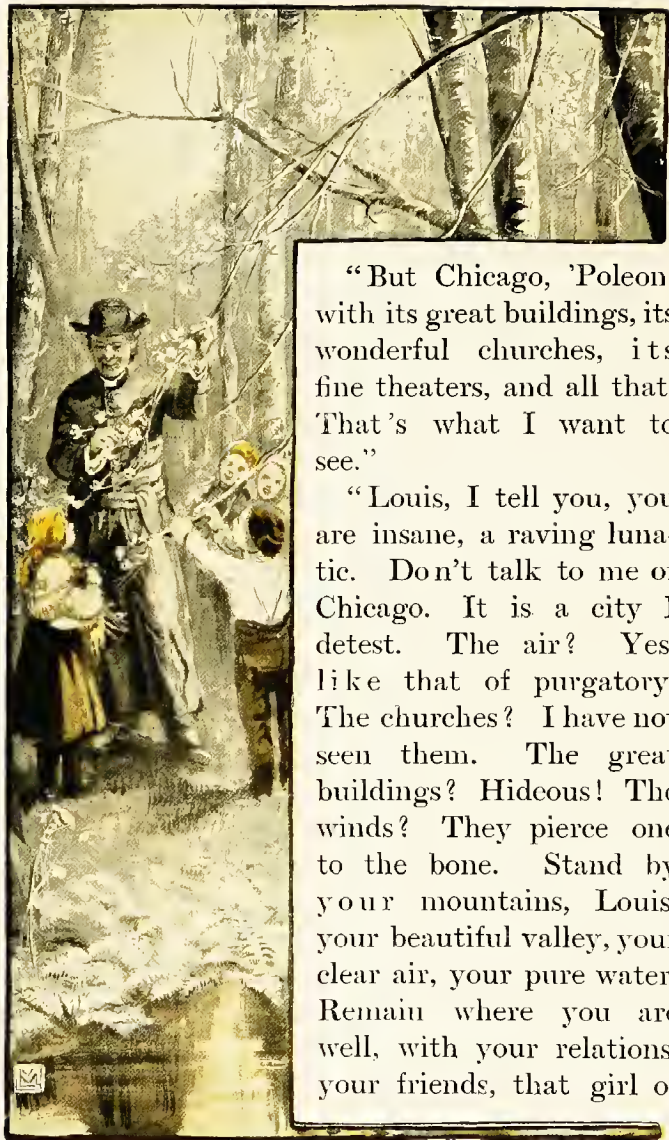
"You are a strange man, 'Poleon. And the catfish of the Ohio, what have you to say to that now?"

"Catfish, you credulous fool. Louis, have you ever seen a catfish? Name of a pig! As well catch a sunken log. Call it sport to take



a catfish. But that trout of this morning,—Louis, I tell you, it was the event of a lifetime, the taking of it. Mon Dieu, how it came at my fly, how it started down the pool, how it leaped from the water and circled round and round! I shall remember it till I die. It is the glory of my life to have caught it. Sport! Ah, Louis, that was true pleasure. And to think that I must leave it all, perhaps never to return. Catfish! Name of the devil! You poor idiot. To compare a miserable catfish to the beauty, the agility of the trout! Mon Dieu, Louis, do not leave Laval because of a catfish.”





“But Chicago, 'Poleon, with its great buildings, its wonderful churches, its fine theaters, and all that. That's what I want to see.”

“Louis, I tell you, you are insane, a raving lunatic. Don't talk to me of Chicago. It is a city I detest. The air? Yes, like that of purgatory. The churches? I have not seen them. The great buildings? Hideous! The winds? They pierce one to the bone. Stand by your mountains, Louis, your beautiful valley, your clear air, your pure water. Remain where you are well, with your relations, your friends, that girl of



yours. Ah, Louis, that was a home thrust. I see you blush by the light of the stars. Surely you would not leave her, the one that you love.”

“O no, 'Poleon, I will come back, after a time, and she will go with me to the far West, where we shall make our fortune. After that we will return to live in Laval for the rest of our days.”

“No, no, Louis, I have seen enough of that. There where one was born and has grown up, there one should stay, and the women above all. Your little girl, do not take her away from Laval. She will sigh for the mountains, the valleys, the clear air, the blue sky, the song of the birds, the friends who remain behind. I know what I say. It is for that reason that I leave Laval, the home of my early years. There is also one that I love—yes, here in this parish—a girl with blue eyes and golden hair, a true blonde, such as one seldom sees among the Canadians, cheeks red as a strawberry, lips such as one would like to kiss. When I went



away she was a mere child of eight years, and I said to myself, "In ten years I will return for her." To this I have looked forward for many years, and here I am at last and I shall go away without her. But she is more beautiful than ever. She fills my heart. Her smile is like the ripple of the Montmorency. Her laughter is like the sound of a little golden bell. Mon Dieu, how I love that little girl! And yet I leave her. And why? Because I will not take her to that mining camp in Nevada, where I must live, since all that I have in the world is there. To-morrow morning I go away alone and this dear place I may never see again. Louis, it is not easy to do this."

"'Poleon," said Louis, growing very pale, "who is this girl? There can be only one such in Laval."

"There is only one, Louis, only one in all the world, my brother."

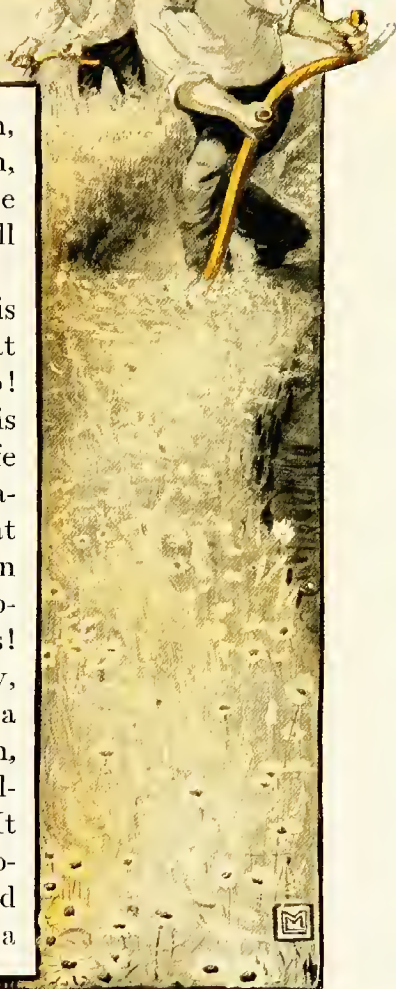
"Then it is Madeleine, 'Poleon, is it not?"

"Yes, Louis, it is she. And now it is your turn. I have confessed. Who is it, Louis?"



"The same, 'Poleon, there is no other. 'Poleon, I will leave Laval in the morning and you shall stay with Madeleine."

"Bah! Louis, Laval is a stupid hole, no good at all. Hurrah for Chicago! Hurrah for Nevada! It is there that one finds life worth living. Live in Laval? Louis, you laugh at me. What should I do in Laval? Marry a little habitant girl? Ridiculous! See me at the age of fifty, an old habitant with a wife and ten children, more or less. Grandchildren also! Morbleu! It is not alluring, the prospect. Better Nevada and the gold mines. Better a



short life and a merry one. Mon Dieu, how late it is! We have talked foolishness, Louis. Good-night, old man. Wake me before sunrise. Laval is the place for you, that is not hard to see."

The next morning, as Louis and Napoleon passed the house where Madeleine lived, there was the flutter of a white handkerchief at the window. Napoleon saw it, but passed on without sign. Half an hour later, as the cart rattled over the slope of a distant hill, looking back Napoleon still could see the flutter of white where Madeleine lived, queen of his heart.



VI.
THE MISER.





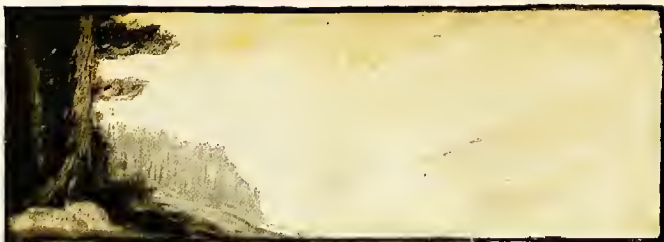
THE MISER.



THE MISER.

1.

IT was very curious, the life of Louis Vaillant-coeur after the departure of his Brother Napoleon. The farm was left to him, also the girl, and surely he had every reason to be happy. As to the farm, that was all right; but as to Madeleine, that was quite another thing. One might think that she consented to marry him on the first time of asking, but not at all. She would not consider him for a moment, and even accused him of being unfaithful to his brother, of trying to supplant him in his property and in the affection of his friends.



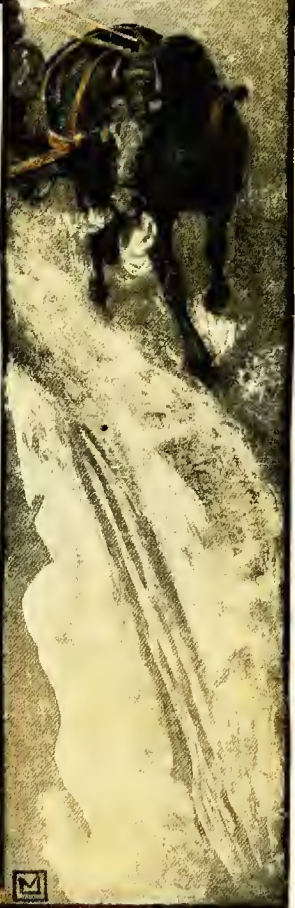
Nor did Madeleine appreciate the sacrifice of Napoleon in giving her up. On the contrary, she could not forgive him for having gone away without a word, and all for the sake of his much loved but unworthy brother. A fig for such brotherly love, so regardless of the feelings of others. The brothers Vaillantcoeur were nothing to her, nor ever could be, and whether they went to Nevada or staid in Laval was quite their own affair. So Madeleine shed no tears, in so far as any one knew, and appeared to be as gay and happy as ever, but presently she went away to visit some cousins at Chateau Richer and to acquire accomplishments at the convent in that parish.

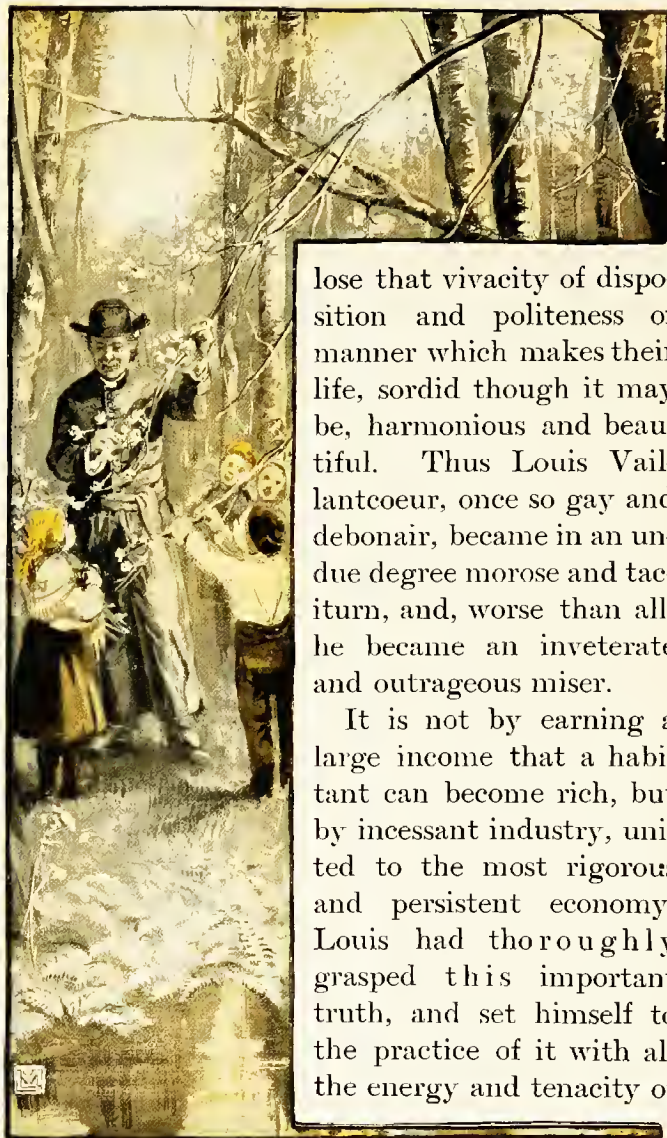
Of Napoleon not a single word was heard from the day of his departure, neither letter nor news of any kind. It was as though the vast outer world, like a great monster, had swallowed him up the moment that he left the quiet shelter of Ste. Brigitte de Laval. He had disappeared utterly, and, as it seemed, forever. The neighbors said that he must be



dead, else he would have written, for he was a fine scholar and always used to write home at frequent intervals. But Louis clung to the belief that he was alive, probably unsuccessful in his ventures, unwilling to confess defeat and ashamed to return to his old home with the stigma of failure upon his name.

Is it any wonder that Louis, abandoned by his brother, rejected by the girl he loved, living alone upon the farm, remote from the neighbors, at some distance, also, from the public road, developed some of the worst characteristics of the Canadian habitants, and began to





lose that vivacity of disposition and politeness of manner which makes their life, sordid though it may be, harmonious and beautiful. Thus Louis Vailantcoeur, once so gay and debonair, became in an undue degree morose and taciturn, and, worse than all, he became an inveterate and outrageous miser.

It is not by earning a large income that a habitant can become rich, but by incessant industry, united to the most rigorous and persistent economy. Louis had thoroughly grasped this important truth, and set himself to the practice of it with all the energy and tenacity of



his being. Not one source of revenue, however insignificant, was overlooked, and the needless expenditure of a single sou was as painful to him as the loss of an old and valued friend.

Many were the tales that the neighbors told of Louis and his penurious ways. In winter, when the roads were good, all the habitants used to haul wood on sleighs to Beauport, twelve or fifteen miles away, but Louis, for the sake of a better price, would go on five miles further, to Quebec, although, after paying toll at the bridge, the extra money was hardly sufficient to buy a meal at the cheapest hotel in town, not to speak of a little drink of whisky to keep out the cold on the way home. Louis, however, never spent any money for drink, nor did he pay anything for food at Quebec, for in St. Roch, not far from the market, dwelt a distant cousin, one Boulanger, at whose house Louis always arrived at the hour of dinner, and where he was never refused a bowl of hot pea-soup, with all the bread and bacon that he could eat. This was wonderful gen-



erosity, for Louis had by nature a great appetite, and, if one may believe the neighbors, he left home on market days without his breakfast, and did not eat another meal until the middle of the following day.

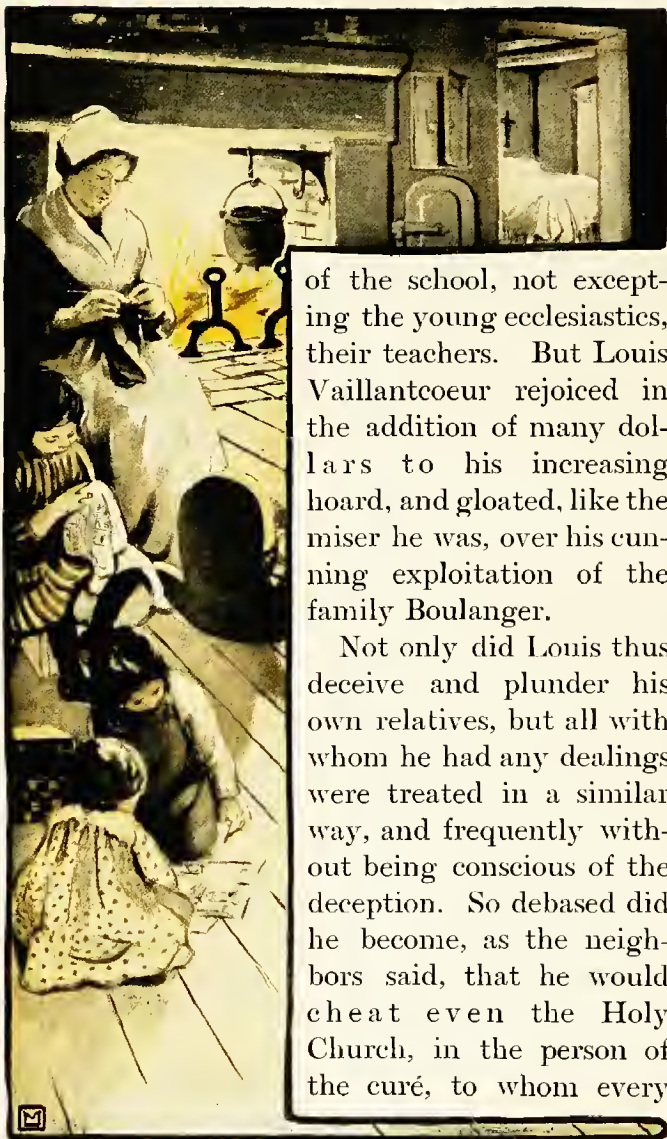
Cousin Boulanger thought to get even with Louis by sending his two boys every summer to spend the vacation at Laval, but Louis knew how to make use of them, for, when there was no work to do in the fields, he would send them to gather strawberries, raspberries or blueberries, according to the season, and these always brought a good price in the city markets. When there were no berries, Louis sent the lads to the woods to gather balsam and spruce gum, sarsaparilla, gold-thread, moss, and birch-bark for causeaux in which to pack maple sugar in the following spring. Even when the young Boulangers were permitted to go fishing, it was for the sake of profit to Louis, for they frequently returned with ten or twelve dozen of fine trout, for which Louis could obtain as much as twenty cents a dozen



at the Hotel St. Louis at Quebec.

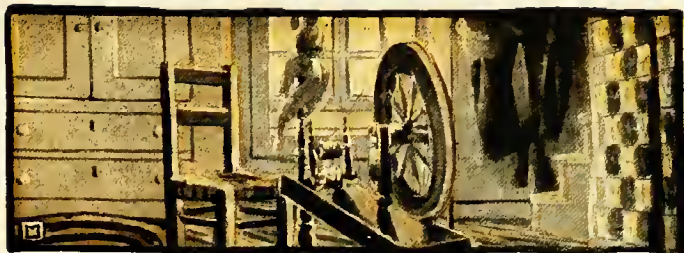
Strange to say, the young citizens did not think it any hardship to be obliged to do these things. On the contrary, they regarded it as play, and since they had plenty of good bread and butter to eat, besides berries and cream, eggs and trout, with now and then a taste of wild-fowl, squirrel, ground hog or bear, for Louis understood the importance of feeding them well, they prospered exceedingly, and in the month of September returned to the Seminary strong and fat, a joy to their parents and a terror to all the petty tyrants





of the school, not excepting the young ecclesiastics, their teachers. But Louis Vaillantcoeur rejoiced in the addition of many dollars to his increasing hoard, and gloated, like the miser he was, over his cunning exploitation of the family Boulanger.

Not only did Louis thus deceive and plunder his own relatives, but all with whom he had any dealings were treated in a similar way, and frequently without being conscious of the deception. So debased did he become, as the neighbors said, that he would cheat even the Holy Church, in the person of the curé, to whom every



year tithes were due from all the faithful, every twenty-sixth bushel of oats and bundle of hay, every tenth pig, besides other contributions, according to the prosperity of the parishioners and the abundance of the harvest. Louis could not altogether avoid these payments, for it was not possible to conceal his fields of hay, oats and potatoes, and the arrival of a litter of pigs was a matter of notoriety in the community, but there was always a mysterious shrinkage when it came to the payment of tithes, causing disappointment to the curé and scandal among the parishioners. The curé could not detect the fraud, but it was a satisfaction to think that the good God knew all about it, and, sooner or later, would bring vengeance upon the head of the sacrilegious miser.

Meanwhile, the miser was well content to lay up treasure on earth, while the good curé acquired merit in heaven, for he never went to mass, nor confession, lest he should put himself in the way of receiving the condemnation



which he deserved, and which the curé was at all times ready to give. Sad penance would Louis have to do when the time came, as come it must, when he should require the services of the Church in the hour of trouble. In that day of wrath he would have to restore four-fold, and afflict his body by fastings, vigils, and prayers innumerable.

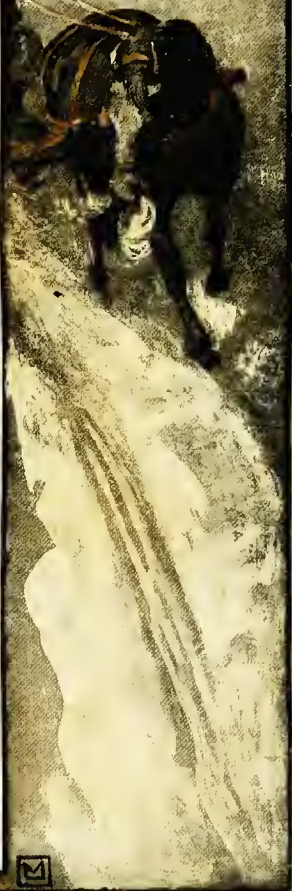
Thus Louis Vaillantcoeur led a godless, loveless life, and his soul, deprived of the spiritual light and air whereby it lived, became small and feeble, withered and dry, a mere remnant and vestige of its former self. But the avaricious part of Louis grew and expanded until it filled his being, and every thought, every wish, had to do with the getting of money, and the safe-keeping of his rapidly increasing hoard. For his yearly savings, though small, in the course of time amounted to a considerable sum, a treasure such as no other habitant of Laval had ever been able to accumulate. He kept it, the neighbors said, in a hole in the floor under his bed, and often, in the dead of

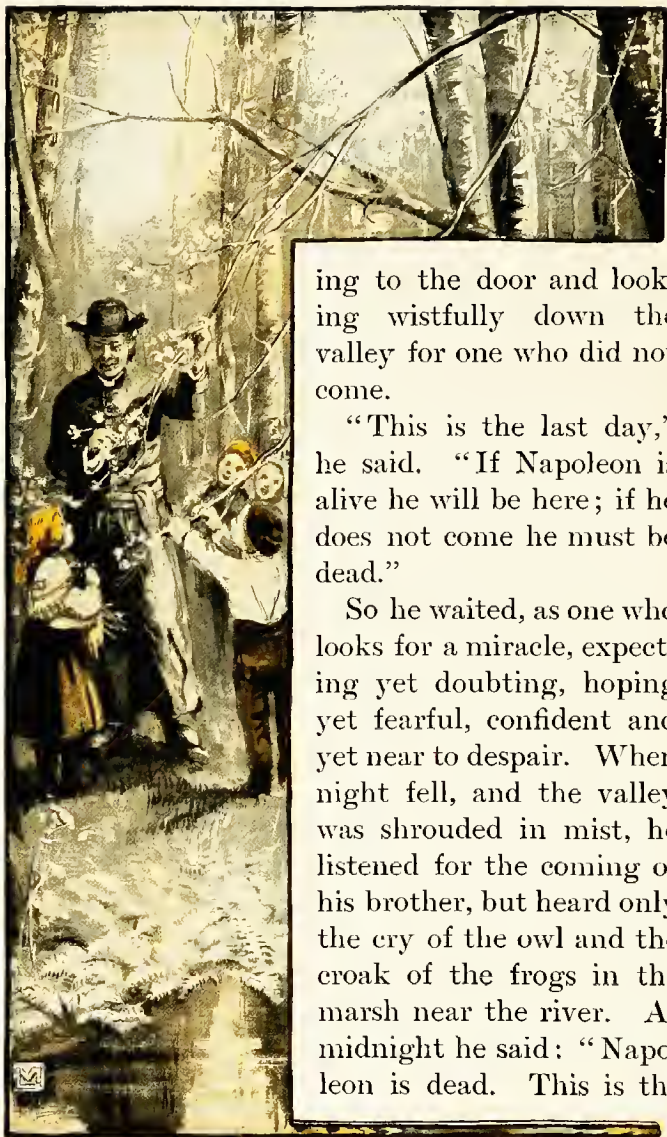


night, a gleam of light could be seen through the window, by which, no doubt, the miser, seated in the midst of piles of gold, was counting and recounting the savings of many years.

Thus the years passed away, until ten years had gone since the departure of Brother Napoleon. Louis remembered, what he had never forgotten, that Napoleon had said, in parting: "In ten years, if possible, I will come again." And now, on the tenth anniversary of that day, he waited and watched for the fulfillment of that promise.

All day he staid about the house, frequently go-





ing to the door and looking wistfully down the valley for one who did not come.

"This is the last day," he said. "If Napoleon is alive he will be here; if he does not come he must be dead."

So he waited, as one who looks for a miracle, expecting yet doubting, hoping yet fearful, confident and yet near to despair. When night fell, and the valley was shrouded in mist, he listened for the coming of his brother, but heard only the cry of the owl and the croak of the frogs in the marsh near the river. At midnight he said: "Napoleon is dead. This is the



end.” Then he went about his usual work of preparation for market, got ready his horse and cart, with a load of potatoes, cabbages, onions, and other vegetables, and, long before daybreak, took the road for Quebec, as he had done so many times before.

But underneath the pile of vegetables was a bag of gold, containing, it is said, at least two thousand dollars, the result of Louis’ extreme industry and frugality during the previous ten years. He was taking it to Quebec, some say, to put it in the bank; others declare that he intended to give it to Madeleine; while others, with greater probability, assert that the entire amount was to be spent in masses for the soul of Brother Napoleon. However that may be, the bag of gold reposed in the bottom of the cart, and Louis drove on through the night, up and down the long sandy hills, now on the shoulder of a dark, forest-clad mountain, now along the banks of the Montmorency River, now down the long slope which stretches from the hills to the great St. Lawrence, until,



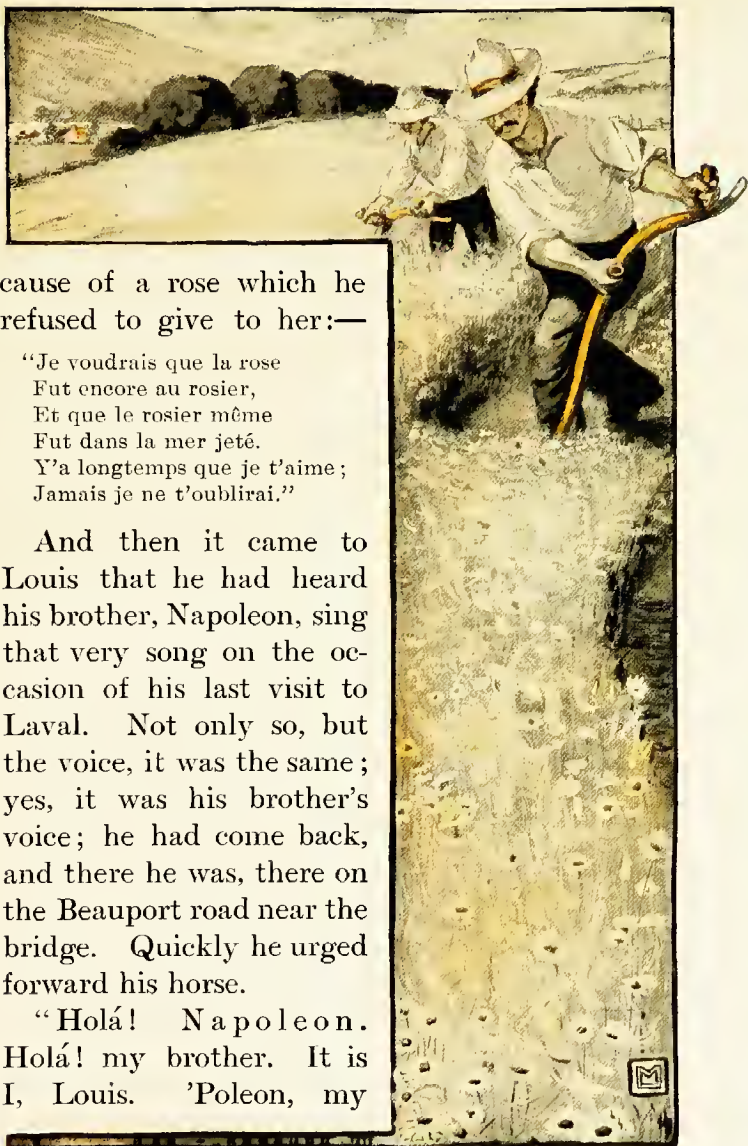
at the first glimmer of dawn, he turned upon the broad, well-kept Beauport road.

A dense fog hung over the Beauport flats, concealing not only the twin spires of the parish church and the gray walls of the ruined mill, but even the white cottages on either side of the road, while in front nothing could be seen but the bank of fog, which opened to allow Louis to drive through, and immediately closed in behind, as though to hide him and his treasure from the prying eyes of a too curious world.

Suddenly, out of the fog came the sound of a strong tenor voice, singing a song once dear to the heart of Louis, an ancient lay of a lover and his rejected love:—

“A la claire fontaine
M'en allant promener,
J'ai trouvé l'eau si belle,
Que je m'y suis baigner.”

Louis stopped to listen. The song was long and sad, but the singer went on to the very end, telling how his lady had forsaken him be-

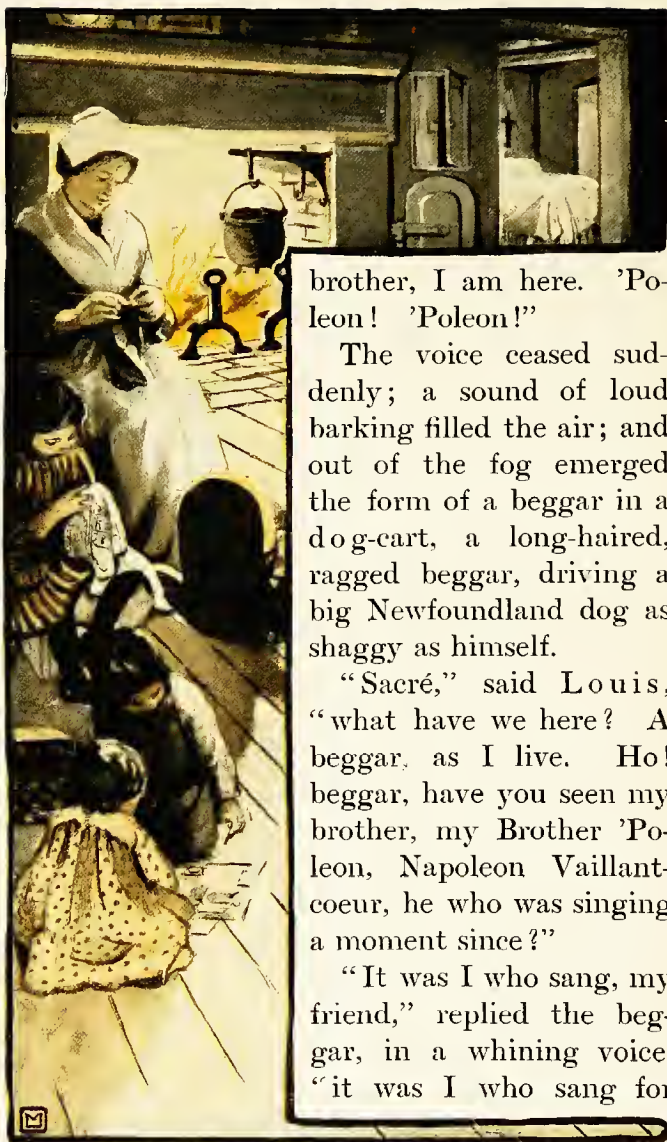


cause of a rose which he refused to give to her:—

“Je voudrais que la rose
Fut encore au rosier,
Et que le rosier même
Fut dans la mer jeté.
Y’a longtemps que je t’aime ;
Jamais je ne t’oublierai.”

And then it came to Louis that he had heard his brother, Napoleon, sing that very song on the occasion of his last visit to Laval. Not only so, but the voice, it was the same ; yes, it was his brother’s voice ; he had come back, and there he was, there on the Beauport road near the bridge. Quickly he urged forward his horse.

“Holá! Napoleon.
Holá! my brother. It is
I, Louis. ’Poleon, my

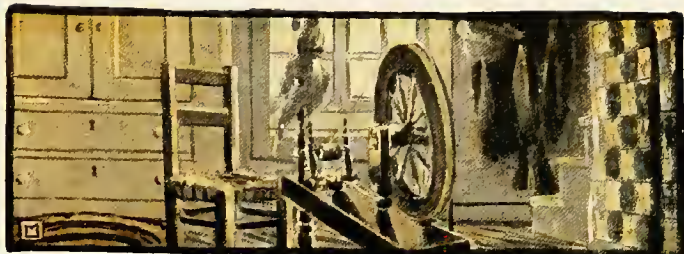


brother, I am here. 'Poleon! 'Poleon!"

The voice ceased suddenly; a sound of loud barking filled the air; and out of the fog emerged the form of a beggar in a dog-cart, a long-haired, ragged beggar, driving a big Newfoundland dog as shaggy as himself.

"Sacré," said Louis, "what have we here? A beggar, as I live. Ho! beggar, have you seen my brother, my Brother 'Poleon, Napoleon Vaillant-coeur, he who was singing a moment since?"

"It was I who sang, my friend," replied the beggar, in a whining voice, "it was I who sang for



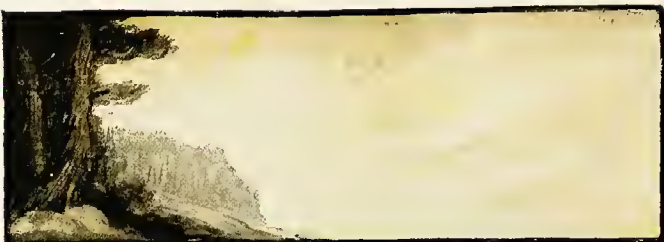
bread. Charity, charity, if you please, for the love of God! Charity, charity, I am dying of hunger."

"Bah!" said Louis in disgust. "Bah! you fat thief, you lazy rascal! Rascal, I say!" And Louis in his anger struck at the beggar with his whip, not hurting him much, perhaps, but certainly arousing his temper, and a terrible temper it was. It was a fine rage, a magnificent passion. The beggar's face grew purple, his eyes seemed to jump out of his head, his hair to stand on end, while his hands were lifted to heaven and his mouth opened to discharge a volley of curses such as were seldom heard along the Beauport road.

"Rascal, I! I a rascal! Name of a pig! Rascal yourself, you cursed habitant, miserable soup-eater, miser, blood-sucker, beast, devil!"

With these and many more words of violence, the beggar and his dog, both furious, precipitated themselves upon Louis, as though to tear him limb from limb.

Louis himself was sufficiently alarmed, but



the horse, a quiet country animal, bolted in sheer terror, galloping at fearful speed along the road toward Quebec, and did not cease his mad career until he arrived, panting and exhausted, at the bridge over the St. Charles, where travelers from all the northern parishes pay toll as they enter the ancient capital.

But Louis Vaillantcoeur paid no toll on this occasion. On the contrary, he returned, as quickly as possible, by the way he had come, for all the vegetables that he was bringing to market had disappeared from the cart, and the bag of gold, that gold which he had loved more than life, more even than his eternal salvation, was gone.

Near the place of his encounter with the beggar he found the vegetables lying on the ground where they had fallen, but the bag of gold was not there. The beggar, too, had disappeared,

All was quiet on the Beauport road, for it was still an hour before sunrise and darker than usual because of the fog, so that the good



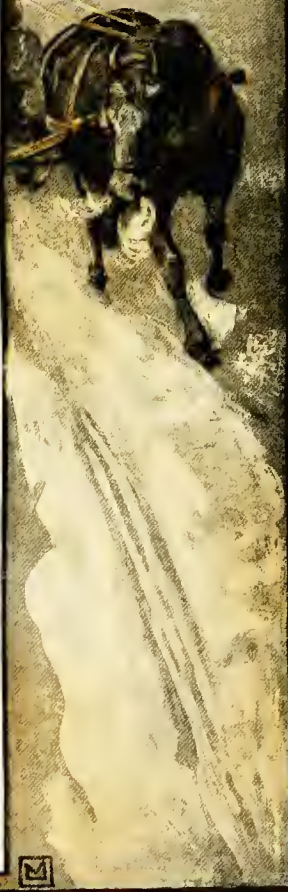
people of Beauport, usually early risers, still slept the sleep of the righteous, the blessed reward of honest toil. Not even the curses of the beggar had disturbed their repose. But now Louis, thinking only of his terrible loss, aroused them by loud knocking, and they were not pleased to be thus rudely awakened.

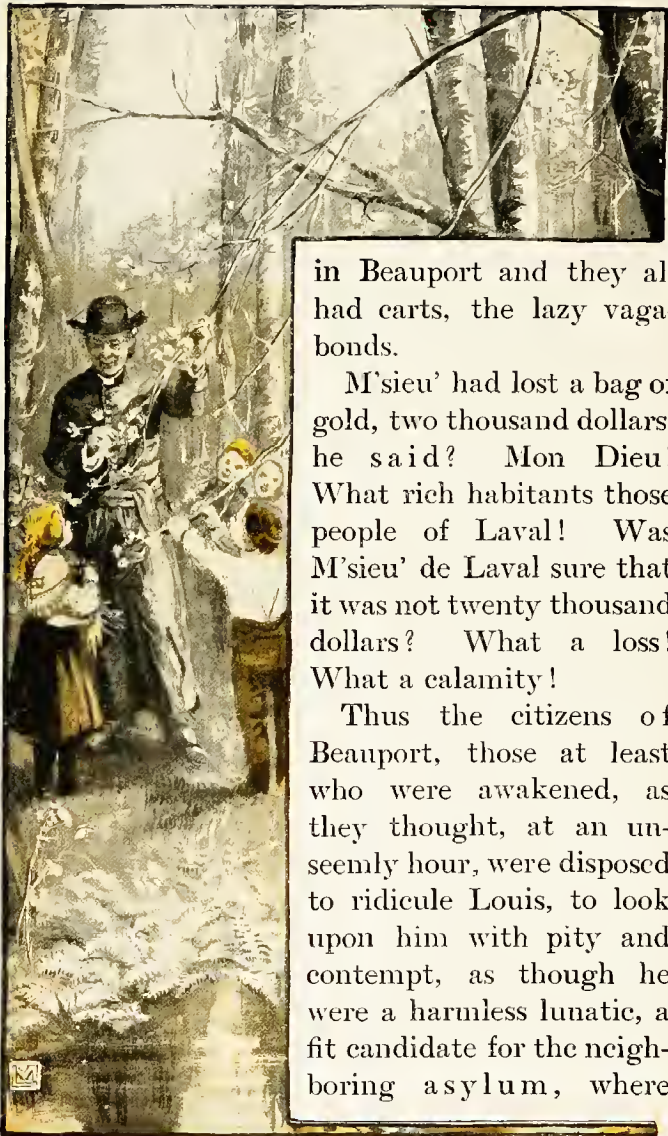
Had they seen a beggar with a dog?

Certainly not! How could they see him when they were fast asleep?

Had they ever seen a beggar like the one Louis had met?

Of course! Assuredly! There were many beggars





in Beauport and they all had carts, the lazy vagabonds.

M'sieu' had lost a bag of gold, two thousand dollars, he said? Mon Dieu! What rich habitants those people of Laval! Was M'sieu' de Laval sure that it was not twenty thousand dollars? What a loss! What a calamity!

Thus the citizens of Beauport, those at least who were awakened, as they thought, at an unseemly hour, were disposed to ridicule Louis, to look upon him with pity and contempt, as though he were a harmless lunatic, a fit candidate for the neighboring asylum, where



there were many who imagined themselves kings, emperors, popes, and millionaires.

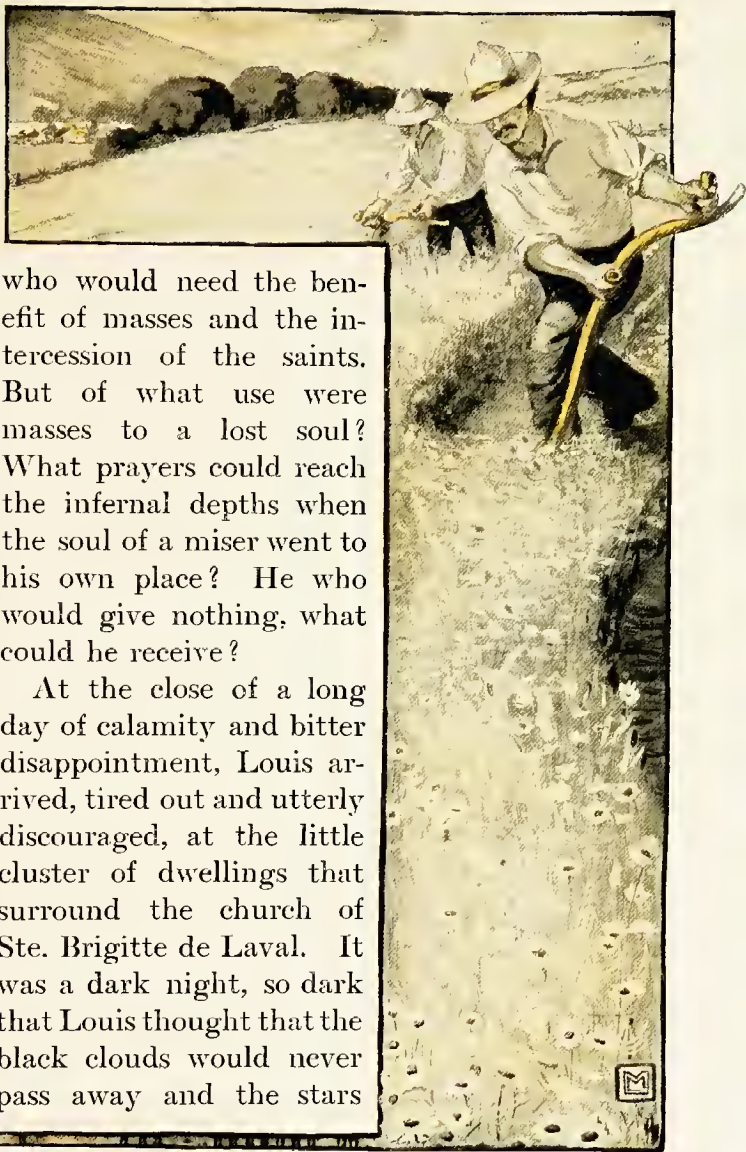
Not all the people of Beauport treated Louis in this cavalier fashion, but nowhere did he get any satisfaction, or any information that might lead to the recovery of his treasure, though he received some sympathy and much advice. Nobody had seen a beggar such as he described. Indeed, it was the general opinion that he must have been a vagabond from some distant parish or from the city, from Quebec or even Montreal. It might be well to apply to the police of those cities; perhaps they might be able to accomplish something. Assuredly, no inhabitant of Beauport would dare to steal in this barefaced way. Besides, most of the beggars of the parish had homes of their own and were good Catholics, who went to mass and to confession from time to time, and, as was well known, they could not do this and retain stolen goods, for no priest would grant absolution without restitution.

This is what Louis should do. He should



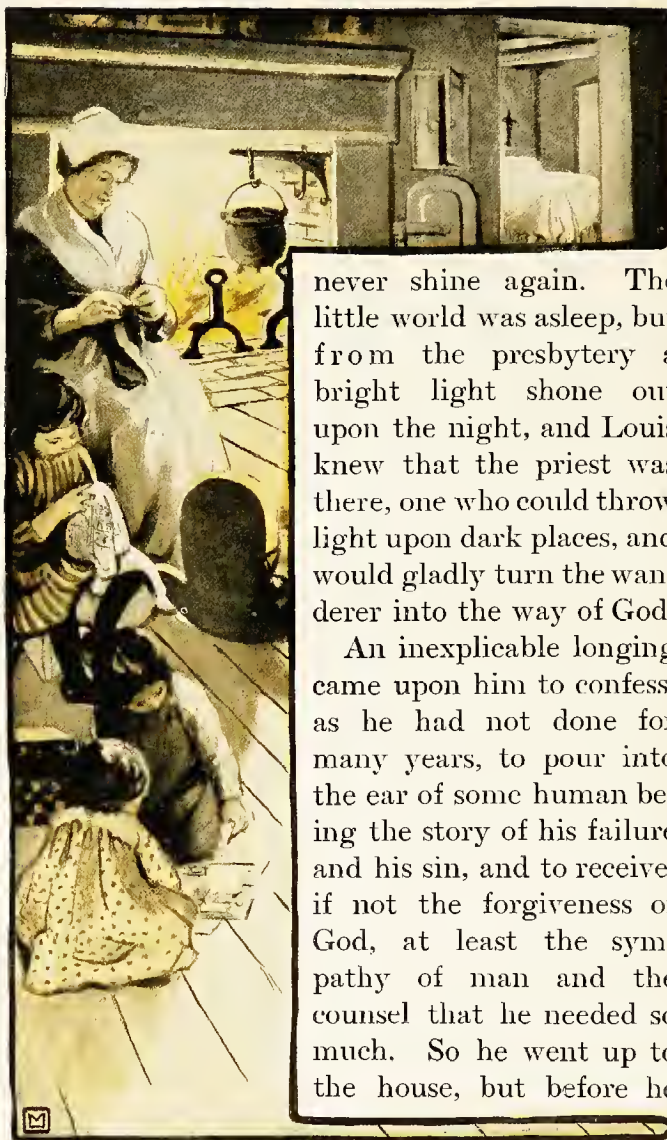
go to the priest, and, if the thief were a resident of the parish, he would be found and compelled to restore the money. The money would be found, without a doubt. The beggar would be seen. He could not disappear into the earth, nor vanish into the air. Certainly, a person such as M'sieu' had described was too remarkable to escape notice. But a reward should be offered, a good, substantial reward, something to arouse the conscience and encourage honesty. For was not a small sum honestly earned better than a vast amount acquired by theft? Money may be lost, but the treasures of the soul could never be taken away.

The simple words of these good people were as daggers to the heart of Louis Vaillantcoeur, he who had sacrificed everything in the getting of money, and now that also was gone. Words could not describe the penury of his soul. His soul? It was a question whether he had a soul, whether he had not sold that, also, to the evil one. It was Louis and not Napoleon



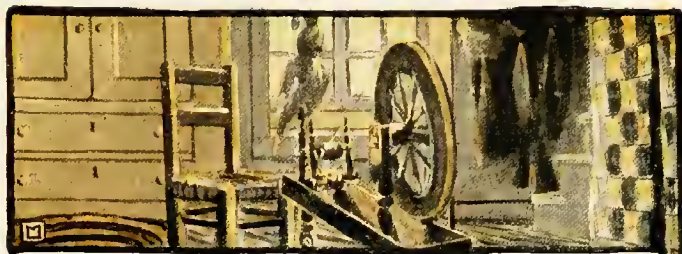
who would need the benefit of masses and the intercession of the saints. But of what use were masses to a lost soul? What prayers could reach the infernal depths when the soul of a miser went to his own place? He who would give nothing, what could he receive?

At the close of a long day of calamity and bitter disappointment, Louis arrived, tired out and utterly discouraged, at the little cluster of dwellings that surround the church of Ste. Brigitte de Laval. It was a dark night, so dark that Louis thought that the black clouds would never pass away and the stars



never shine again. The little world was asleep, but from the presbytery a bright light shone out upon the night, and Louis knew that the priest was there, one who could throw light upon dark places, and would gladly turn the wanderer into the way of God.

An inexplicable longing came upon him to confess, as he had not done for many years, to pour into the ear of some human being the story of his failure and his sin, and to receive, if not the forgiveness of God, at least the sympathy of man and the counsel that he needed so much. So he went up to the house, but before he



could knock the door was opened by the curé himself.

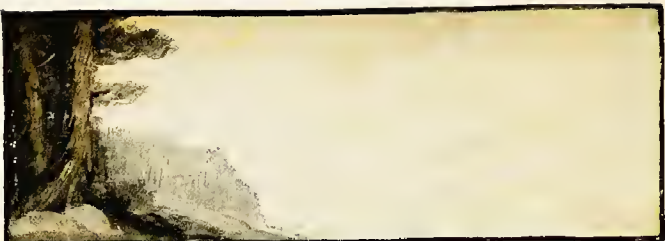
“Come in, Louis,” he said, “I have heard of your misfortune and I thought that you would come.”

To this good man Louis told the story of his life for the past ten years, without palliation or excuse, and, as he confessed, a heavy weight was lifted from his heart, and a gleam of hope illumined his beclouded spirit. The priest no longer seemed like a minister of vengeance, but an angel of forgiveness, bringing peace to the soul.

“But,” said the curé, when Louis had finished, “why did you do all this? For what purpose was all this wealth which you accumulated at such a cost?”

“Did I not mention it, M’sieu’ le Curé? It was for Brother Napoleon, of course. He was to have it upon his return, and the farm also, that he might marry Madeleine and live in Laval all his life.’

“And you,” said the curé, “what would you have done?”



"I also would have remained," said Louis, "to see their happiness. That would have been enough for me."

"My son," said the good priest, "the sin of avarice is a mortal sin. It is the love of money for its own sake, or for the sake of selfish enjoyment. But when a man engages in the pursuit of wealth for the glory of God, or for the good of others, we do not call it avarice, we call it sublime devotion."

Tears came to the eyes of the curé as he pronounced the absolution and inflicted light penance for certain venal sins, and the stony heart of Louis was melted and became a heart of flesh.

"Louis," said the curé, as the young habitant rose to go, "there is another penitent here whom I should like you to meet. You have seen him before, I think."

They went into the kitchen, and there stood the beggar of the morning, the same, yet not the same, for, though still clad in rags, he had an air of independence and prosperity quite



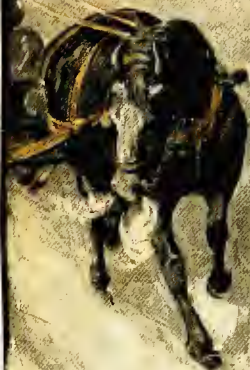
unprofessional for a beggar. Also he smiled pleasantly as he held out a heavy bag of gold.

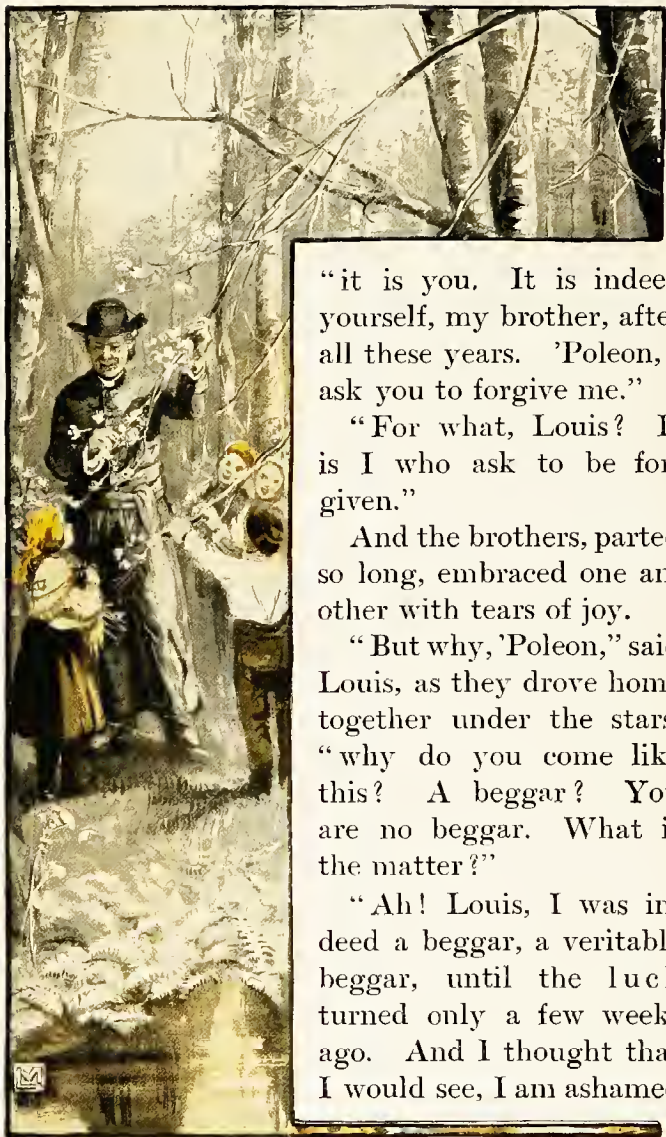
"There," he said, "there is the gold that M'sieu' has lost. And I am sorry that I was the cause of so much trouble."

Louis stared at him. "It is you," he said, "and I was unkind to you. Forgive me. Ah, the gold! Will you not keep it in memory of one whom I loved, but whom I shall never see again?"

"Louis," said the beggar, in the old familiar voice, "do you not know me? Is it possible that I have changed so much?"

"'Poleon," said Louis,





"it is you. It is indeed yourself, my brother, after all these years. 'Poleon, I ask you to forgive me."

"For what, Louis? It is I who ask to be forgiven."

And the brothers, parted so long, embraced one another with tears of joy.

"But why, 'Poleon," said Louis, as they drove home together under the stars, "why do you come like this? A beggar? You are no beggar. What is the matter?"

"Ah! Louis, I was indeed a beggar, a veritable beggar, until the luck turned only a few weeks ago. And I thought that I would see, I am ashamed



to confess it, how you would receive your brother as he was, a beggar. And when you struck me, there on the bridge, I thought, for a moment, that you were casting me off. And I was angry. Ah, how angry I was! But you have forgiven me, my brother. Louis, you are a better man than I. It is you who have the faithful heart.”

Louis made no reply, but from the valley beneath came the voice of the river speaking to Napoleon in the old, familiar language, while far above in the dark fir-trees a summer breeze made music such as he loved to hear. Napoleon was glad that he had come back, after long wanderings, to his native land.

Presently, when they had climbed the last of the hills, there stood the old home, at the end of the lane, among the trees, and the sky was clear overhead, with thousands of stars, and the silver crescent of the new moon stood over the mountain, as on many a night in the long ago.

Napoleon took a deep breath of the clear, cool air, the air of his native hills.

“Here we are, Louis. The old place, it is fine, is it not? And you were expecting me, old man?”

“Yes, 'Poleon, I was expecting you every day for all these years. And you have come; you are here. It is good to be at home again, is it not?”

“And Madeleine?” said Napoleon.

“Madeleine, my brother, she also has been expecting you, I think.”





